Revisiting the (Proto-)Feminist Traits of Leonora Christina's Life and Work through Nina Karin Monsen's *Jammersminne*

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This paper argues that the novel *Jammersminne* by the Norwegian writer Nina Karin Monsen exhibits striking intertextual references, which are central to a proper understanding of this evidently feminist text, and that the life and work of the Danish noblewoman Leonora Christina forms a central part of Monsen's intertextual strategy. Beyond the obvious title analogy between Monsen's epistolary novel *Jammersminne* and Leonora Christina's prison recollections *Jammers Minde*, Monsen's novel refers to Leonora Christina through a number of subtle hints. A comparative look at Monsen's *Jammersminne* and Leonora Christina's writings will furthermore shed light on the latter's (alleged) feminist viewpoints, as exhibited in the French autobiography, in *Jammers Minde*, and in *Hæltinners Pryd*.

Introduction

A woman arrives in Copenhagen; alone, without her family. She is received by a host, who is as cold as her accommodation, an inornate room, where this woman will write a diary about her past and present experiences, interspersed with sections addressed to someone in the family she left behind. This process of writing, as much as her isolation from her familiar environment, unlocks ever-profounder – and ever-changing – views and reflections, until she emerges as an independent human being, emancipated from the husband that had caused her isolation and the desperation marking the earlier parts of her diary.

This is essentially the plot of the novel *Jammersminne* (1980) by the Norwegian writer Nina Karin Monsen (b. 1943), which chronicles the development of a Norwegian teacher called Maria, who had been left by her husband Harald on grounds of her (alleged) infidelity, but who comes to Copenhagen to finish her studies (i.e. her *hovedfagsoppgave*) and who – through writing – comes to understand that her husband's decision to leave her had been a blessing, since it had saved her from a life of eternal submission. But this novel with the curious title *Jammersminne* also shares a few conspicuous traits with one of Denmark's finest examples of Baroque writing, i.e. with *Jammers Minde* (1869), a prison account writ-

ten between 1674 and (approximately) 1698[1] by the Danish noblewoman Leonora Christina (1621–1698), who – due to her marriage and potential complicity to her treacherous husband Corfitz Ulfeldt (1606–1664) – was imprisoned in the Blue Tower in Copenhagen between 1663 and 1685 by her half-brother King Frederik III, and who spent these years writing her recollections and observations.[2]

Beyond the obvious title resemblance between these two works, the most striking parallel is that both of their starting point is the heroine's arrival in Copenhagen. Did Nina Karin Monsen choose Copenhagen for her protagonist Maria's sabbatical semester in order to point in the direction of Leonora Christina? The plot motivates Maria's destination through her studies on Hans Christian Andersen, particularly on his tale *Skyggen*, with whose eponymous protagonist she identifies (Monsen 1980, 6). Another plot-internally plausible reason for why Maria does not conduct her studies in, for example, Oslo, is that only in an environment that seems entirely foreign (Monsen 1980, 7) she gains enough distance to her previous life to find herself. There are thus numerous reasons for Monsen's choice of scenery. However, even though the plot of Monsen's *Jammersminne* parallels that of Leonora Christina's *magnum opus* only dimly, the central

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1 It is not known exactly when Leonora Christina stopped working on her manuscript (although it is not an unlikely assumption that Leonora Christina had continued her work until she became too ill to proceed), but in most other regards, previous research has been able to reconstruct the emergence of *Jammers Minde*. While the Danish librarian Sophus Birket Smith, who was tasked with editing and publishing *Jammers Minde* after its discovery in 1868, noticed that the manuscript consisted of three parts, he still believed what Leonora Christina suggested in her manuscript, i.e. that the entire account had originally been written in the Blue Tower; he thus attributed some orthographic changes he eventually noticed in the second and third part of the text, and which correspond to the orthography used by Leonora Christina during her final years in Maribo Abbey, to the assumption that these parts must be the author's *re*writings of parts of *Jammers Minde* (cf. Lindegård Hjorth 1998, xvii). Only through the work of Otto Glismann it was fully realized that only the first part of *Jammers Minde* was written in the Blue Tower, and that Leonora Christina had very consciously worked to conceal this fact by retroactively adapting her text, for example by correcting her original use of the past tense (see Glismann 1966). Glismann's work was then continued by Marita Akhøj Nielsen and Ingelise Nielsen, who confirmed Glismann's results, but were also able to develop a more detailed timeline for the manuscript genesis. For a comprehensive presentation of Sophus Birket Smith's work on *Jammers Minde*, see Lindegård Hjorth 1998. The same edition provides a summary of the results of the research on the manuscript conducted by Marita Akhøj Nielsen and Ingelise Nielsen, see Akhøj Nielsen 1998a and 1998b, as well as Nielsen 1998. See also Akhøj Nielsen 2000.

2 For comprehensive and reliable biographies of Leonora Christina and Ulfeldt, respectively, the reader is referred to the two-volume work *Leonora Christina Grevinde Ulfeldts Historie* (1879–1881) by the Danish librarian and first editor of *Jammers Minde* Sophus Birket Smith, as well as to Steffen Heiberg's Corfitz Ulfeldt-biography *Enhjørningen Corfitz Ulfeldt* (1993).

topic of *Jammersminne* is one that has engaged scholars studying Leonora Christina's life and work as well, i.e. her relationship with her husband and hence with herself, as a human being subject to the normative conditions of her time.

The following article is thus an examination of the (proto-)feminist traits occasionally attributed to Leonora Christina's life and work based on the novel *Jammersminne* by Nina Karin Monsen, a Norwegian writer of the twentieth century with an unequivocal feminist agenda. It will first briefly present previous research that has interpreted Leonora Christina's work in a feminist context and then outline the subtle parallels between the two women's works, in order to argue for an understanding of *Jammersminne* as a comment on Leonora Christina. The article will then proceed to discuss the seemingly emancipatory nature of Leonora Christina's writings before concluding with the suggestion that, based on Monsen's novel, there is ample evidence for the possibility of a meaningful, as opposed to anachronistic, use of the Leonora Christina-subject matter in a gender discussion, and that Leonora Christina's testimonies lend themselves to such a discussion.

Historical and Feminist Readings of Leonora Christina's Life and Work

Monsen is known as a moral and feminist philosopher and before *Jammersminne*, she published books with such explicit titles as *Det kvinnelige menneske. Feministisk filosofi* (1975) and *Kvinnepakten* (1977). Leonora Christina, on the other hand, has been termed »en dansk virago« (Brøndsted 1983, 109–120) and »Denmark's first feminist« (albeit with a question mark; Lunde and Pusch 1988, 47–115). These designations – the latter of which might appear incongruous for a characterization of a premodern woman, who is furthermore known for her unconditional loyalty towards her treacherous husband – are largely due to a gynæceum[3] called *Hæltinners Pryd* (cf. Dömling 2002, 307–318), on which Leonora

3 Originally a room or area in a house designated for traditionally female activities, the term *gynæceum* was adopted as a designation for a text narrating all kinds of commendable qualities exhibited by women, usually by referring to historical or mythical examples of laudable women. For more information on this topic, see Alenius 1993.

Christina worked both in and outside the Blue Tower,[4] but of which only the first part has been preserved. In this collection of short biographies of remarkable historical and (semi-)mythical women, Leonora Christina argues for a consideration of women as equal to men in every respect, for example in terms of strength, valour and loyalty. Since the qualities of the women praised in this gynæceum are suspiciously akin to Leonora Christina's self-portrayal in her so-called French autobiography (1673), written entirely in the Blue Tower and in French (hence the title), and narrating its author's life before her most recent imprisonment in 1663, it has been suggested that Leonora Christina's auto-/biographical writings were meant to be regarded as an inter-referential textual network, in which Leonora Christina could easily be considered one of the commendable *hæltinner* listed in her gynæceum (Maaløe 1977, 10).[5] This theory is, on the one hand, supported by the narrative form used for the French autobiography, i.e. the third person, which invites the reader to associate Leonora Christina's story with those of her heroines. One practical reason for Leonora Christina's decision to write her first attempt at an autobiography in the third person was that the text was not meant to be published by Leonora Christina herself, but by Otto Sperling the Younger, a friend of the Ulfeldt family, who was working on a gynæceum himself (which, however, never reached the public's eye). The most conspicuous reason, though, to connect Leonora Christina to the brave and intelligent heroines of *Hæltinners Pryd*, is her self-portrayal in the French autobiography versus that of her husband, who is generally depicted as more emotional, impulsive and weaker than his wife.

The theme of Leonora Christina's superiority is continued in *Jammers Minde*,[6] but remains entirely gender-neutral, since this narrative constitutes an attempt to discredit her imprisonment, and the people responsible for it, altogether. In this text, Leonora Christina thus foregrounds her loyalty to her husband, i.e. her Christian duty to remain obedient, in an

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4 Leonora Christina herself states that she »fuldente« (Leonora Christina 1998, 226) *Hæltinners Pryd* in 1684, i.e. one year before her release from the Blue Tower. Sophus Birket Smith, however, believed that she had rather finished a first draft of the work in the Blue Tower and then continued her work during her »retirement« in Maribo, since her statements regarding the gynæceum were so imprecise (Birket Smith 1881, 264).

5 See also Aasen 1982, 133; Brøndsted 1983, 114; and Wamberg 1992, 37.

6 This supremacy in turn translates into envy and, ultimately, persecution, which is the common topic of the French autobiography and *Jammers Minde* (cf. Akhøj Nielsen 2002, 93).

attempt to imply a moral supremacy over the Ulfeldts' enemies, while *Hæltinners Pryd* negates any legitimacy of this inequality by providing examples of women's merits. The French autobiography, in turn, spearheads its author's feminist argument, by portraying a wife unequivocally superior to her husband. *Jammers Minde*, however, still plays a crucial role in revealing Leonora Christina's broader strategy, since these recollections exhibit a glaring absence of Corfitz Ulfeldt, which has provided their author with a space to portray herself in a way entirely unusual for women's autobiographies of this age,[7] i.e. as an independent human being instead of someone's wife.

This complex interplay of Leonora Christina's writings has fostered a scholarly corpus preoccupied with the question of Leonora Christina's actual relationship with her husband (or with the other sex in general), in which one side has adopted a feminist approach to the subject matter, while the other warns of any such anachronism. Thomas Seiler, for example, advises against applying any modern characterizations to Leonora Christina:

> Im Kern geht es bei solchen Überlegungen immer um die Frage nach dem emanzipatorischen Gehalt der Figur Leonora Christinas, die je nach Lesart bald als emanzipiert, bald als unterdrückt dargestellt wird. Bei diesen Untersuchungen scheinen die historischen Voraussetzungen nur am Rande eine Rolle zu spielen, werden doch relativ unbekümmert moderne Vorstellungen von weiblicher Identität an diese Figur des 17. Jahrhunderts herangetragen. (Seiler 2006, 45)[8]

Whichever side one prefers, the ambivalences of Leonora Christina's self-portrayal and the portrayal of her husband have rendered her works texts of continued relevance until this day, which is why she has also been

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7 Some of the earliest autobiographies written by women were in fact biographies of their husbands including a chapter on themselves, i.e. short autobiographies within biographies (cf. Smith and Watson 2003, 7).

8 »Deliberations of this kind are always essentially concerned with the question of the emancipatory substance of Leonora Christina as a figure, which, depending on the respective reading, is occasionally represented as emancipated, or as oppressed. These analyses seem to consider the historical premises only marginally, since their authors carelessly apply modern conceptions of female identity to this figure of the seventeenth century.«

read and reinterpreted in the times of the (proto-)feminist movements of the nineteeth and the twentieth centuries. In the novel *En Skizze efter det virkelige Liv* (1853) by Mathilde Fibiger (1830–1872), one of Denmark's foremost feminist writers (cf. Busk-Jensen 1991, 314–316), for example, the sheer mention of Leonora Christina leads to a vivid discussion, whose participants are at odds over whether Leonora Christina's famous loyalty to her husband and the subsequent glorification of her sacrifice was to be considered an expression of the successful subjugation of women, or whether her decision to place her love for her husband over a blindly idealized patriotism should be regarded as an act of freedom (Fibiger 1853, 105–111). Fibiger leaves the matter of this discussion unresolved, which confirms what is suggested in the present article, i.e. that the Leonora Christina-subject matter remains topical due to the – for her time – unique identity, and hence identification model, created through Leonora Christina's writings, and thus especially suitable for a discussion about equality concepts. Furthermore, when Fibiger's *Skizze* was published, *Jammers Minde* had not been discovered yet – and neither the French autobiography nor *Hæltinners Pryd* were published at that time; this occurred only in the twentieth century. However, in 1870, Fibiger wrote a review of the recently published prison testimony *Jammers Minde* for the Swedish *Tidskrift för hemmet*, in which she praises Leonora Christina as »Danskheden selv« (Fibiger 1870, 108), even though Leonora Christina does not mention Denmark – or any home country, for that matter – even once in her text. Leonora Christina's demonstrative omission of her past life as the wife of the traitor Corfitz Ulfeldt had provided her with an identity of her own and thus rehabilitated her in the eyes of Mathilde Fibiger.

A similar process of identity-creation takes place in Monsen's *Jammersminne*, since the protagonist Maria, too, uses a period of despair and isolation to write a new, independent identity for herself, which opposes her previous identification with her societal role as a woman, which – despite all equality accomplishments of the past – is still based on the pillars of being a wife and a mother. This overarching topic as well as diverse references in Monsen's novel indicating an affinity with Leonora Christina's writings, and with *Jammers Minde* in particular, suggests that one need not necessarily follow the imperative of historical contextualization for a »correct« reading of Leonora Christina's texts, because she addresses culturally and time-independent topics such as equality, conscientiousness and (heterosexual) love.

Cultural and Emotional Border Crossings in Monsen's *Jammersminne*

As asserted above, the title of Monsen's novel as well as the choice of Copenhagen for Maria's exile are the most conspicuous elements alluding to an analogy with Leonora Christina's work; without the Danish setting, the title resemblance could be dismissed as sheer coincidence, while all the other, more subtle similarities would probably have gone completely unnoticed if the novel carried a less demonstrative title. Upon a closer look, however, the narrative reveals micro-affinities suggesting – against all odds – a parallelism, and hence continuity, between these two women's stories.

Maria has come to Copenhagen with two projects in mind. On the one hand, her aim is to progress with her studies. A more pressing objective of hers, however, is to find herself and gain clarity over her past life. Her sabbatical in Denmark aligns thus with a journey into the depths of her personality: »I virkeligheten har jeg lagt ut på en reise i meg selv« (Monsen 1980, 6). This journey, however, entails immobility and isolation, since Maria is afraid to leave the safety of her cell-like domicile and prefers to reflect on her past relationship with men, and in particular with her husband, in solitude: »Her sitter jeg i stjernerommet mitt, hver kveld teller jeg de seks veggene, og er blitt menneske utelukket fra menneskenes verden« (Monsen 1980, 92). Eventually, both of Maria's projects succeed: her academic writing progresses to a satisfactory degree and her isolation – which on several occasions is described in terms reminiscent of prison (or even dungeon) experiences (see, e.g., Monsen 1980, 158) – yields the desired transformation of her life: she bonds with a fellow (male) student on a non-physical level, she meets a man who is not afraid of sharing his innermost feelings, and, most importantly, she learns to enjoy being single and independent. As part of her husband's domestic world, she had been invisible, and as a wife left by her husband, she simply ceased to exist (Monsen 1980, 19: »Da forholdet til Harald opphørte, forsvant også jeg for meg selv«). Yet eventually, in her isolation and through the process of writing, she uncovers and retrieves an autonomous identity (Monsen 1980, 38: »grensene for meg selv«).

A central, albeit perhaps not particularly blatant parallel between Leonora Christina's and Maria's respective stories is that their emancipation processes are documented and achieved through writing. Maria states this circumstance openly (Monsen 1980, 12: »bare gjennom ordene finnes en

vei til min egen virkelighet«), while Leonora Christina has famously initiated a success story and eventually obtained a fame overtrumping that of her husband by far through the posthumous publication (and rather spectacular transmission history) of her life writings.[9] The other three distinguishing attributes suggesting a kinship between Leonora Christina's writings and the written transformation of Maria are the respective protagonists' physical and emotional attachment to their hermitage, the occupational therapy performed by both women in the form of handicraft, and the tesselate outcome of their writing activity.

Crafting Identity

Comparing Leonora Christina's story to that of Maria based on both women's fervour for crafting might seem superficial, especially since references to handicraft play only a marginal role in *Jammersminne*. Their function, however, is anything but marginal. In the beginning of the account, i.e. before Maria ventures to uncover her most intimate memories and thoughts in writing, she busies herself with embroidery, an occupation frequently performed by Leonora Christina as well, even though in the first years of her imprisonment, she was denied the right to engage in any activity at all: »Mit Kaarß war mig saa meget diß tyngere i ded første, efftersom saa høyligen war forbøden icke att tilstæde mig hwercken Kniiff Sax, Traa eller noget ieg kunde fordriffwe tiiden med« (Leonora Christina 1998, 99). She found, however, ways and means to bypass this regal decree by using random materials she found in her cell for creative purposes. This industriousness of hers has marveled readers of *Jammers Minde* as well as scholars ever since. The professional denomination applied to Leonora Christina by the Swiss *Lexikon der Frau in zwei Bänden* (1954), which characterizes her as artistic embroiderer, woodcarver, sculptor and painter (1504: »dän. Kunststickerin, Schnitzerin, Bildhauerin u. Malerin«) while barely mentioning her writings, is a gross and fortunately unique reduction of her work, but it is also exemplary of posterity's interest in Leonora Christina's handicraft, which has been regarded as additional proof of her astonishing creative determination. This, in turn, resembles the initial phase of Maria's exile. The reader learns only

9 The best example of this curious development is the preamble to the Corfitz Ulfeldt-biography *Enhjørningen Corfitz Ulfeldt*, in which the author Steffen Heiberg laments that there has been relatively little research on the subject of his study, »[m]ens Leonora Christina er blevet godt og grundigt biograferet« (Heiberg 1993, 7).

gradually about the true reasons for the discord between her and her husband.[10] Instead, Maria achieves clarity and overcomes the worst moments of her initial desperation and isolation through embroidery. At the same time, this occupational therapy helps her to recognize a transcendent, timeless pattern, one that is old and new at the same time: »Den glatte tråden snor seg gjennom stoffet og skaper et mønster. Jeg gjenkjenner av og til mønsteret. Det har vært der bestandig, og allikevel er det helt nytt« (Monsen 1980, 6).

Maria's cryptic reference to an eternal, recurring pattern is echoed in one of the unposted letters Maria writes to her husband, since here, too, she hints at a hidden, or rather denied continuity: »Du tror du vet noe om hvordan det er å avslutte et forhold, fortid er fortid, sier du. Men det er alltid en pinlig rest tilbake av hvert forhold. Forhold mellom mennesker kan ikke utslettes fullstendig« (Monsen 1980, 20). These subtle hints, which intratextually refer to the protagonist's need to come to terms with her past behaviour and relationships, may also be considered intertextual references to a past beyond Maria's youth, to past relations between humans, as exemplified by Leonora Christina's life. This intertextual chain is further supported by Maria's initial resolution to leave her husband and daughter Hege behind in order to progress with her studies and character development abroad, as well as by her final realization that her marital relationship had been initiated without the basic precondition for a happy marriage being fulfilled. Maria's reflections on her past and on her husband's farewell letter lead her to conclude that they had never been equals, but man and woman in the traditional, hierarchically conditioned sense of these words. Maria eventually concludes that under such conditions true love remains an unattainable ideal:

> Han har dosert for meg i årevis om meg, om ham, om forholdet, om kjærlighet og samliv mellom mann og kvinne. Jeg skulle gjerne bli i stand til å kommunisere om *min* virkelighet i disse ti årene. Jeg

10 Little by little, we learn that Maria and Harald had been at odds over how to define and live a happy marital life for years. Initially, the gravest bone of contention seems to have been Maria's refusal to take care of all household chores without her husband's involvement, which in her view is by no means a trivial issue of conflict: »I spørsmålet om husarbeidet ligger makten begravet« (Monsen 1980, 29). The proceeding revelations, however, center on issues of sexuality and inequality as, for example, exemplified by Harald's demand that his wife should remain physically attractive and available to him, yet without arousing the attention of other men.

> skulle gjerne fortelle ham noe om *min* underlige form for kjærlighet – for det var ikke kjærlighet, det beginner å gå opp for meg. En ufri kvinne kan ikke elske (Monsen 1980, 22).

In this regard, Monsen's novel exhibits similarities to what is arguably the most influential work of Norwegian literature on the asymmetric relationship between the sexes, i.e. Henrik Ibsen's drama *Et dukkehjem* (whose heroine incidentally carries a name closely related to that of Leonora Christina), since Maria, too, realizes eventually that her husband had never loved her true self, but the promise of a perfect wife. This promise had become unfulfillable after Maria had been pressured into having intercourse by a friend of Harald's: »Hun drømte om mirakelet, det vidunderlige som skulle hende – at de to endelig ble ett og ble venner med hverandre, støttet og solidariserte seg med hverandre« (Monsen 1980, 111). But instead, Harald leaves Maria, while being appreciative of his friend's lack of sexual restraint.

Fulfillment in Captivity

The impression that Maria's development is inspired by that of the imprisoned Countess Ulfeldt is further substantiated by the room descriptions provided in the novel. In the very beginning of Maria's account, she is too agitated to devote a lot of attention to the description of her domicile, a basement room with her own private bathroom and kitchen at the bottom of a Danish family's house. Initially, she only describes the room as better than expected, but nevertheless »nakent og kaldt – merkelig med fem, nesten seks vegger om en regner med den halve ved døren. Som en stjerne – [hun] skal bo inne i en iskald, hvit stjerne« (Monsen 1980, 5). After having overcome her initial emotional paralysis, Maria settles in her cold cellar room, which provides an occasion to describe it in further detail:

> Rommet er fremdeles nakent, jeg hadde ingen pyntegjenstander med meg. Med de hvite murstensveggene, de sortbrune vinduskarmene og døren i samme farve virker det fremmedartet, som om det tilhørte en annen kultur. (…) Gardinene er lyse beige, sofaen er mørkebrun; en sovesofa som står stillet mot den lengste veggen, nær vinduet. Ellers finnes det bare et skrivebord, det er forresten fint med god plass, et lite bord og en stol med løs rygg som ikke gir støtte og hvile. Lyset kommer fra en steril, modern leselampe og

> en hvit kuppel i taket. Jeg kommer til å bruke mange stearinlys her (Monsen 1980, 7).

Much like Leonora Christina, who describes her cell after having overcome an initial phase of desperation and passive suicidal attempts (Leonora Christina 1998, 73 f.), Maria eventually takes the time to describe the abode that will be her home and prison for the coming months. On the one hand, Maria's depiction is striking in that it paints a picture of a habitable, yet cold and dark room, which only receives daylight from a single elevated window, a feature that figures prominently in Leonora Christina's prison narrative as well. Through her cell window, which could only be reached by stacking furniture on top of each other – a solution Leonora Christina devised on her own, seemingly to help her simpleton maid watch an acrobatic show – Leonora Christina could watch the best parts of the performance herself (Leonora Christina 1998, 133), as well as her onlooking rival, Queen Sophie Amalie, together with her husband Frederik III, both of whom at this point she had not faced in many years. In her account of this episode, Leonora Christina eventually expresses surprise at her opponents' seeming unawareness of her continued existence (Leonora Christina 1998, 133: »oc vndrede ieg mig siden paa, att de icke kaste øyet did, der ieg stoed; ieg loed mig icke mercke for quinden, att ieg haffde seet dem«). This is an unusually vulnerable revelation of Leonora Christina's experience of a situation in which she had been rendered invisible to the outside world. However, when Leonora Christina penned this particular episode, she had already left the Blue Tower behind, and with it her forced invisibility.

Eventually, Maria begins to feel consoled by her isolation. Much like Leonora Christina, who refused to leave her cell in the Blue Tower immediately after receiving the news that she had been granted freedom, but instead waited until the day had passed because she wanted to leave in dignity (Leonora Christina 1998, 245: »wil oc ud med manner«), Maria seems to have become attached to her new environment and, with it, her new identity: »Lurer på om jeg er blitt redd for å gå ut av mitt fengsel – isolasjonen virker ikke skremmende lenger, bare trygg« (Monsen 1980, 123).

A similarly explicit expression of emotional attachment to her prison is absent in Leonora Christina's writings. In *Jammers Minde*, she states on multiple occasions that her ordeal is a trial she cannot avoid to undergo, since it is her fate to follow the path of Job (Leonora Christina 1998, 78–

81).[11] As a consequence, she furthermore clarifies in the preamble, *Fortalen Til mine Børn*, that due to her guards' lackadaisical work ethics, she could have fled her prison on several occasions, but chose not to:

> Til Besluttning beder ieg Eder mine Hierte Kiere Børn, att I icke lader ded Eder vnderlig forrekomme, att ieg icke haffuer wilt tage imod den Leylighed, wed huilcken ieg til min Friihed haffuer kundet komme: Naar I ded rett betencker, saa haffde ded huercken werret Eder eller mig tienlig (Leonora Christina 1998, 14*).

Her account, however, also suggests that her earthly actions do in no way justify this punishment. She states this explicitly in *Fortalen*, where she claims to have been put in this situation for having been loved by a virtuous man[12] and for remaining loyal to him, which in the context of her self-portrayal as »Christi Kaarßdragerske« (Leonora Christina 1998, 5*) and as »*L*iidende *C*hristinne« (Leonora Christina 1998, 235) must appear like a self-sacrificing observance of Christian dogmatics:

> Den anden tilskyndende Aarsage er, den Trøst ded Eder mine Kiære Børn wil were, att I formedelst denne *Iammers-Minde* forsickris, att ieg vskyldeligen Liider, att mig icke ringeste Sag er tillagt, oc att ieg intet er bleffuen Beskylt, for huilcket I mine Kiære Børn tør Bluis oc Øynene skammeligen nederslaa: Ieg liider for att haffue

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11 See, e.g. Leonora Christina 1998, 80: »Endeligen saae Gud til mig med sine Naadsens Øygne, saa at ieg den 31 *Augusti* fick en roelig Søffn om Natten, oc ret vdi dagningen wognede ieg med effterfølgende Ord vdi Munden. Mein Kind verzage nicht, wan du von Gott gestraffet wirst, dan welchen der Herr lieb hatt den züchtiget er. Er steupet aber einen Ieglichen Sohn den er auffnimt«. Unless otherwise indicated, italics in quotations from *Jammers Minde* were applied by the editors in order to indicate that the respective words were either written in latin, instead of the common gothic, letters, or abbreviated (see Lindegård Hjorth 1998b, lxxi). See also Leonora Christina 1998, 2*: »Hierte Kiere Børn, billigen kand ieg med Iob sige; Dersom man min Iammer weye kunde, oc minde Liidelser tilsammen i en Wect-Skaal legge, da skulle de were tyngere end Saand i Haffuet«. On Leonora Christina's reinterpretation of her prison sentence as an ordeal in the tradition of Job, see Dömling 2001.

12 Curiously enough, Leonora Christina never actually mentions any feelings of love on her behalf. Even more curious, though, is that this fact has largely gone unmentioned so far, even though scholars, writers and artists have been fascinated by the Ulfeldt couple's relationship for centuries. Bodil Wamberg 1992, 113-116, though, one of Leonora Christina's toughest critic, has questioned the legendary love of the Ulfeldt couple altogether and instead suggested that it was a myth created by Leonora Christina to support her brand as faithful wife.

> werret ælsket aff en dydig Herre oc Hoßbonde, for att ey haffue Hannem i Vlycken forlat wilt (Leonora Christina 1998, 4*).[13]

Leonora Christina then fortifies this statement by presenting her daily prison life as a farce, in which lowly murderers, adulterers and drunkards watch over an innocent princess (Heitmann 1994, 149 f.). Thus, Leonora Christina depicts a temporary victory of Evil over Good, while also stating that this situation is to be considered a trial meant to prove her supremacy, an interpretation employed to eventually »forvandle sin skam og fornedrelse til en åndelig sejr« (Mai 1993, 286). For this reason, she also refuses to leave her prison at the first chance, like a common criminal, but decides to even extend her prison term by half a day. This can, of course, be seen as an attempt to demonstrate her composure and strong will; but it has also been suggested by Annegret Heitmann (1994, 157) that after the Ulfeldt couple's final fall from grace, the outside world had little to offer. After all, her imprisonment implied that she had been considered a political prisoner, i.e. an influential, even dangerous person. Her release, on the other hand, meant that she was no longer viewed as such and that she had lost – besides her husband, most of her children, her friends and wealth – her once considerable status. This view, in turn, in which the Blue Tower figures as a protective, preservative sphere, correlates to Maria's fear of leaving what she considers her prison.

Narrative Collages

Finally, another conspicuous correlation between *Jammersminne* and Leonora Christina's writings is Maria's use of a genre collage for the documentation of her emotional development. *Jammersminne* is a mix of diary entries and letters – two text forms closely akin to the autobiographical genre – as well as third-person narrative used to relate memories from Maria's past. This use of the third person for a portrayal of Maria's past identity corresponds to the grammatical person used in Leonora Christina's French autobiography. In both cases this switch dissociates the writing person from the written identity, while in *Jammersminne* it

13 To the same effect, Leonora Christina indicates in her French autobiography that the calamities she had to endure throughout her life were on the one hand the result of people's envy of her individual assets, but also due to her and her husband's unusually strong bond. In this spirit, she states to have *begun* to suffer for her husband at a very young age (Leonora Christina 1958, 1d), which anticipates her similarly suggestive statement in *Jammers Minde*.

also levels any grammatical difference between the narrating Maria's life and the archetypal »vidunderlige kvinneverden« (Monsen 1980, 35; see below), a world dictated by men's physical desires. This alternation of first and third-person narration furthermore corresponds to the identity-shaping effect of Leonora Christina's (auto)biographical writings: *Jammers Minde* is written in the first person, the French autobiography and *Hæltinners Pryd*, however, in the third person, which, in the case of the French autobiography had a plausible practical reason: the account was not meant to be made public by its author, but by a friend of the Ulfeldt family, i.e. Otto Sperling the Younger, who intended to integrate Leonora Christina's life story into a gynæceum he was working on (but which never reached the public's eye). This original purpose of the French autobiography, in turn, highlights a conspicuous parallel between this text and *Hæltinners Pryd*, in that both texts were written with the explicit intention to chronicle the lives of remarkable women, which in the case of *Hæltinners Pryd* should explicitly (and perhaps implicitly in the case of the French autobiography too) serve as counter-examples to heroic men, as will be detailed in the following chapter. It has, however, also been suggested that the use of the third person in the French autobiography may be regarded as a tool used to dissociate the imprisoned Leonora Christina from her former identity as the tremendously rich and powerful Countess Ulfeldt (Heitmann 1989, 58), a strategy also employed in *Jammersminne* through the omission of any detailed accounts of the past. Both Leonora Christina and Maria use writing, and autobiographical writing in particular, as an identity-constituting process. Leonora Christina does so by breaking up her life story into two autobiographical texts – the French autobiography on the one hand, which narrates her life up until her imprisonment in the third person, and *Jammers Minde* on the other hand, which focuses exclusively on her life in the Blue Tower and is written in the first person – while the narrator in *Jammersminne* achieves the same kind of split, or rather renewed, identity by interweaving what Leonora Christina kept strictly apart. At the same time, this switch between the past and the present creates continuity (and hence a hermeneutical link to Leonora Christina) and the prospect of a universal enlightenment, which Maria addresses by referring to the past, or rather the concept of something being past, as an illusion: »Jeg er nødt til å gjennomleve det hele en gang til – ikke gjenoppleve – jeg vet nok om slike reiser til å innse at fortiden er en innbildning. Det må vente en klarhet på meg et sted, en klarhet som kan vare« (Monsen 1980, 7).

In addition to Leonora Christina's and Maria's common use of diverse grammatical persons for the purpose of rewriting their identity, both women furthermore apply a fragmentary, tessellate approach to their paper work. Since Leonora Christina was not granted any means of entertaining herself until the death of Frederik III in 1670, after which a new, more benignant regal couple acceded to the throne, she had to forge writing materials from whatever she could find. Her initial prison testimony, which was largely concerned with documenting the course of the interrogation that followed her forced return to Copenhagen, was thus written on the paper wrapping that enclosed the confectionery that was delivered into her cell (she was a former King's daughter, after all). And since Leonora Christina spent her entire prison sentence as well as her retirement in Maribo writing, editing and rewriting her diverse auto-/biographical accounts, *Jammers Minde* remained a work in progress; only the first part, the only part of the manuscript which was actually written in the Blue Tower, is preserved in a state conveying completion. The entire account was furthermore written on paper sheets and slips from diverse paper mills and in different periods of Leonora Christina's later life, due to which it has been possible to reconstruct the genesis of *Jammers Minde*. As indicated in the introductory section, an examination of the diverse paper and ink types used by Leonora Christina revealed that her prison account is a highly constructed document, whose author chose her words very carefully, but also unfinished, since only the first part is preserved in a clean copy. *Hæltinners Pryd* only adds to the fragmentary character of Leonora Christina's work, because only the first part of this gynæceum is preserved until today. The French autobiography, on the other hand, is one of the few works written by Leonora Christina, which is preserved until this day[14] and which was also penned without any longer interruptions, since Otto Sperling the

14 The French autobiography was, however, lost for an unknown period of time. Since Leonora Christina gave her manuscript to Otto Sperling the Younger, it remained in the possession of the Sperling family, until it was handed over to the Royal Library in Copenhagen in 1721. There, it disappeared at an unknown point in time and it was assumed that the manuscript had been a casualty of the Copenhagen fire of 1728, which also affected the library. However, in 1952, the manuscript was miraculously found in the school library of the Atheneum gymnasium in Hamburg-Altona and published soon afterwards. An example for a text of literary quality reportedly written by Leonora Christina yet considered lost is a play which, according to her housekeeper in Maribo Abbey by the name of Dorthea Sophie Urne, was even staged by the Maribo staff; see Birket Smith 1872, 54, and Rostrup 1918.

Younger was awaiting the completion of his father's and Leonora Christina's account before leaving Denmark.[15]

With a similar purpose in mind, i.e. that of a work in progress, Maria chooses a diary consisting of loose paper slips to transmit her thoughts, since this type of stationary allows her to maintain complete control over the narrative of her life in isolation: »Så kan jeg skrive det jeg vil og kaste det etterpå – eller gjøre noe annet med det« (Monsen 1980, 6). The letters dotting Maria's diary add to its mosaic character. Despite the dominant diary format of this epistolary novel, letters constitute a key tool in Maria's character development, since she recollects her past through a re-reading of her and her husband's entire correspondence. Yet, the diary novel is also interspersed with letters to her husband, of which she only posts the last one, but which allow her to find a new meaning in her existence and to come to terms with her true self: »Det spiller ingen rolle lenger om jeg sender brevene jeg skriver til Harald – de gir meg simpelthen meningen med min tilværelse akkurat nå« (Monsen 1980, 35). In order to come to this realization, Maria also re-remembers her and her husband's past, which is marked by his accusations, which are all based on his conviction that she refuses to adopt her true identity, i.e. that of – what Harald considers – a true woman.

Finally, both Maria and Leonora Christina use a writing process that allows them to edit their accounts, and hence to maintain complete control over their life narrative, while at the same time including authenticity assertions, which are a common autobiographical strategy (Fuhrmann 1979). Leonora Christina does so explicitly by claiming forthrightness in terms of her past behaviour: in *Fortalen Til mine Børn*, she states to have been

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15 In 1670, Otto Sperling the Younger, the son of Otto Sperling the Elder, who was a close friend of the Ulfeldt family and a prisoner of the Blue Tower from 1664 until his death in 1681, came to Copenhagen to advocate for his father. Since his pleas did not yield any results, he eventually asked both his father and Leonora Christina to provide him with written accounts of their respective lives, which he intended to publish. On Leonora Christina's part, this resulted in the French autobiography, which she – as indicated in the text – wrote for Otto Sperling the Younger: at the beginning of her account, Leonora Christina states to have written the following text to »satisfaire [la] curiosité« (Leonora Christina 1958, 1a) of the *Monsieur* addressed in the account, i.e. Otto Sperling the Younger. As highlighted by Anne-Marie Mai, Leonora Christina had thus strong political and tactical motivations for writing her first attempt at an autobiography (Mai 1993, 292). Otto Sperling the Elder, on the other hand, wrote his *Selbstbiographie*, a German text relating the events of his life up until 1659, including a narratively separate *Historia carceris*, which was published by Sophus Birket Smith (in Danish translation) in 1885. Sperling followed thus a similar strategy as Leonora Christina, by separating his life in freedom from what followed after his apprehension in 1664.

unjustly imprisoned (Leonora Christina 1998, 5*) and in her records of the interrogations that took place in the first days of her imprisonment (Leonora Christina 1998, 14–72)[16] she furthermore insists that she and her husband had not pursued any illegal activities. Leonora Christina's insistence on her innocence in a text addressed to her children (through the use of a preamble titled *Til mine Børn*) creates a sense of intimacy, which helps to convey authenticity. The text furthermore implies immediacy, since the manuscript reveals that Leonora Christina had retroactively adapted grammatical indicators of time and place in order to create a sensation of simultaneousness of writing act and written experience (Akhøj Nielsen 1998b, lvi).[17] All of these strategies are rather typical of autobiographical writings, since writers of this genre would usually aim to convey – and thus create – identity in the sense of authenticity. In a similar fashion, Maria asserts in the beginning of her diary that although her behaviour had effected her and her husband's separation, she can also honestly state to have been entirely herself in these situations: »Jeg vet at den gangen var jeg hundre prosent ærlig – ikke et ord eller en følelse jeg trodde hadde betydning, underslo jeg« (Monsen 1980, 9). She then fortifies her claim to authenticity with her diary entries, which relate the most intimate moments of her life.

There are thus several correlations between Leonora Christina's writings and Monsen's *Jammersminne*, which encourage a re-reading of the former's texts with an increased focus on their author's thoughts on equality, instead of immediately discarding any such approach based on Leonora Christina's historical environment. After all, a consideration of *Jammers Minde* as part of the feminist canon has the potential to explain and even fortify this text's position as a timeless Danish classic.

»En dansk virago« – Womanhood and Equality in Leonora Christina's Writings

The core topic of *Jammersminne* is thus the relationship between a man and a woman in a society living according to specific gender norms and

16 This part of the account concurs approximately with the first part of the manuscript, which suggests that Leonora Christina was very eager to have her own records of the interrogation.

17 Leonora Christina had, for example, substituted past tense for present tense, such as on p. 73, where a current line reads »der vdi staar tuende Senge«; originally, Leonora Christina had used the word »stoed«.

in which, despite all legal advances, traditional hierarchies and expectations have been all but erased.[18] In Maria's view, her husband's demand that she do all the domestic work as well as men's pervasive sexual cravings are the most immediate and blatant implementations of this hierarchy. Her memories uncover further grievances that contribute to this inequality: the prevalent discrepancy in age and sexual experience whenever a man and a woman enter a relationship;[19] the perceived and seemingly fundamental and insurmountable dissimilarity between men and women;[20] and men's projections of their mystified ideas of women onto their partners as a consequence of this assumed sexual difference,[21] as Maria explains in one of her letters: »Du fortalte meg om min vidunderlige kvinneverden. Før jeg traff deg, ante jeg ikke at jeg hadde en slik verden« (Monsen 1980, 35). Maria eventually begins to hate the sheer term *kvinne* and its connotations because of its constraints: »Han vil alltid ende opp med å ville ha en kvinne, mens jeg vil ha et menneske« (Monsen 1980, 82). There is, of course, no such development in Leonora Christina's writings; she embraces her societal role to the fullest since it gave her a welcome occasion to recast herself as a faithful, and hence

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18 Cf. Monsen 1980, 41: »Langsomt og umerkelig vevde det seg et net omkring meg. Jeg hadde funnet meg et nett uten å vite det, og allikevel gikk jeg inn i det med åpne øyne. Det er dette vi kaller for konvensjoner, skikk og bruk – en måte å leve på vi aldri har det fnugg av sjanse til å velge frivillig eller avstå fra. Om vi klarer å snu oss unna, så definerer nettet oss – ubønnhørlig«.

19 Maria states to have been »nesten voksen« (Monsen 1980, 23) when she met Harald, who was »bare noen få år eldre[, m]en (…) virket så voksen« (ibid.). Maria had dated men before, usually older than her (which is presented as the norm), but had remained a virgin. In comparison, Leonora Christina was engaged to Corfitz Ulfeldt, back then a promising young squire frequently travelling abroad, when she was nine years old, and became his wife when she was fifteen, i.e. half her husband's age.

20 In Maria's perspective, Harald's reactionary views on humans, to which she refers by quoting parts of his farewell letter to her, are invariably gendered: »har jeg ventet og håpet at du ville bidra med din kvinnelighet like sterkt som jeg med min maskulinitet« (Monsen 1980, 27). Maria refutes this obsessively binary world-view, much like Leonora Christina, who argues for a consideration of men and woman as equals in *Hæltinners Pryd*.

21 Because Leonora Christina is a prime example of a women, who throughout the ages was idolized and mythically elevated to the level of an archetypal, ideal woman, it would go too far to even begin to recount the history of her historical and literary reception. Suffice it to say, in 1869 the Danish critic Georg Brandes (1842–1927), one of the most central figures of Denmark's intellectual milieu, wrote a highly favourable review of Leonora Christina's recently published prison testimony, in which he called her »den ædleste og mest udviklede af deres Kjøn her i Danmark« (Brandes 2005, 67).

morally superior, woman. There are, however, indicators throughout her texts that encourage a reading in the line of Monsen's *Jammersminne*, i.e. in a feminist context.

Hæltinners Pryd

The most obvious example of Leonora Christina's attitude towards gender is the gynæceum *Hæltinners Pryd*, in which Leonora Christina openly argues for a consideration of women as equal to men in every regard. However, when considering Leonora Christina's intention regarding this text, it is important to keep in mind that only one out of three parts of this text has been preserved, for according to Leonora Christina's own statements in *Jammers Minde*, she was actually working on a text about »Striidbare; Om Fornufftige Regentinner, Om Troefaste; Om Kyske; Om Gudfrygtige; Om Dydige, Om Ulyckelige, oc om Lærde oc om Standhafftige« (Leonora Christina 1998, 226), i.e. on much more than has been preserved. This incomplete transmission of Leonora Christina's gynæceum has resulted in an increased focus on the gynæceum's initial topic of strong, battlesome women and contributed to Leonora Christina's fame as a sort of virago, i.e. (originally) a female warrior or a woman exhibiting traits typically associated with men, such as strength. Mogens Brøndsted, the author of the article 'En dansk virago', for example, contends that Leonora Christina fancied wearing men's attire »for at understrege sin stærke vilje« (Brøndsted 1983, 112), even though there were only few reported occasions that showed Leonora Christina dressing up as a man, and most of these incidences were pragmatically, rather than ideologically, motivated. When the Ulfeldt family escaped from Denmark in 1651, Leonora Christina did indeed disguise her sex through masculine clothing. She subsequently writes of this episode in her life as »an adventure worth a novel« (Leonora Christina 1958, 5d: »vne piece digne de Romans«), which indicates that she had not disliked being taken for a man; and after their arrival in Stockholm, where the couple enjoyed the protection of Queen Christina of Sweden (1626–1689), Leonora Christina kept wearing her masculine clothes for a while. However, it was not uncommon for women of this time to travel in male attire for safety reasons (Hættner Aurelius 1996, 173), and Leonora Christina's continued use of her travel clothes could be attributed to the reported circumstance that Queen Christina liked women in men's clothing and Corfitz Ulfeldt, but not so much Leonora Christina herself (Hartmann 1988, 186–188).

Be that as it may, *Hæltinners Pryd* refers in its very beginning to the injustice done to women in considering them weaker than men:

> Løffuindens Hierte er saa Keckmodig som Løwens: Mangen Quinde haffuer større styrcke end som mangen Mand, Mangen Quinde haffuer oc wel saa Keckt ed mod som Mangen Mand; de suare icke alle til Mands Naffn i Gierningen som bærer Tittel aff Mands Naffn men offte suare Quinder til Helters Naffn i Gierningen, oc bere dog ickun Quinders Naffn: Huoroffte seer man quindactige Hierter i Mands Legemer, oc der imod igien mandelige Kræffter i suage Karr: Ded er Vbilligt, att man maaler Gierningen effter Persohnen, oc skatter icke Persohnen effter Gierningen. (Leonora Christina 1977, 21)

If Leonora Christina had broached the subject of equality only in *Hæltinners Pryd*, the notions put forward in this text could be easily discarded as literary convention. After all, the gynæceum was a rather popular genre in premodern times – even Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754) produced one, which, of course, included Leonora Christina: *Adskillige Heltinders og navnkundige Damers sammenlignede Historier efter Plutarchi Maade* (1745). Leonora Christina's statements regarding equality are, however, unusually assertive (such as the one quoted above) and, what is more, they exhibit a suspicious resemblance to her self-portrayal in her autobiographical texts and, necessarily, to the portrayal of her husband and other men.

Leonora Christina and the Weaker Sex

Leonora Christina refutes, for example, the idea that women are physically weaker than men (Leonora Christina 1977, 21). Ethereously fragile women were, admittedly, a Romantic ideal and hence postdating the era of resolute, robust women such as Leonora Christina and her equally headstrong ancestors Kirsten Munk (1598–1658) and Ellen Marsvin (1572–1649), but nevertheless Leonora Christina's self-portrayal has been highlighted as conspicuous in its contrastive depiction of Corfitz Ulfeldt. In her autobiographical texts, she presents herself as physically and mentally strong. In *Jammers Minde*, for example, she reports to have castigated a maid that kept pouring water onto the cell floor in open disregard of Leonora Christina's protests (Leonora Christina 1998, 186), she assures another one that she could easily »quæle den stærcke-

ste Karl med [s]iine bare hænder« (ibid., 119) after being denied access to grooming tools, and in the French autobiography, *nostre femme*, as she refers to herself, carries her husband and their loyal servant and co-prisoner Peter Pflügge down the cliffs near the (now ruinous) Hammershus fortress after the two men had become physically incapacitated in an – ultimately failed – attempt to escape their temporary (July 1660 to December 1661) prison on the Danish island of Bornholm. Leonora Christina attributes her ability to perform such an impressive feat to divine assistance (Leonora Christina 1958, 10c), but her texts also ensure an interpretation of her entire life as God-chosen, since she alone, as opposed to the (predominantly male) people around her, seems to be worthy of this support.

Bodil Wamberg (1992, 39), among others, has highlighted the rather miserable depiction of Corfitz Ulfeldt in the French autobiography and suggested that this portrayal was the result of accumulated frustration over his increasingly ill-judged behaviour during the last years of his life.[22] The contemporary and subsequent reception of this man has been mixed, to say the least, but in his heyday, Ulfeldt was a powerful and highly esteemed statesman (Heiberg 1993, 21 and 26)[23] – which makes Leonora Christina's portrayal of the man for whom she underwent a prison sentence of more than two decades all the more astounding (cf. Akhøj Nielsen 2003/2004). In the French autobiography, he is first presented as a limping and poor, even indebted, nobleman. Leonora Christina, however, overcomes these deficiencies through her fidelity, and through her own wealth. In the following account, he is increasingly stubborn, sick and volatile, while Leonora Christina remains strong and stable, thus turning into a proactive protagonist.

Jammers Minde, in turn, offers no (substantial) recollections of Corfitz Ulfeldt, but weak and dependent men, which already figure as a central element in the French autobiography, are a dominant presence in Leonora Christina's prison narrative as well. In the French autobiography, the little Leonora Christina consoles her trembling tutor Wichmann Hasebard during a life-threatening storm, she saves her negligent teacher Alexander von Kückelsom from sure dismissal, she remains

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22 In a similar fashion, Steffen Heiberg (1993, 27), the foremost Corfitz Ulfeldt-scholar, attests much of Corfitz Ulfeldt's behaviour to Leonora Christina's ambitions (and vice versa).

23 On a similar note, Sophus Birket Smith reports Corfitz Ulfeldt to have been considered »kraftig« and »imponerende« (Birket Smith 1881, 67).

unintimidated by her choleric prison guard on Bornholm, Major General Adolph Fuchs, whom she also outsmarts through her escape from Hammershus,[24] during which she – on top of everything – had to take care of both her husband and their servant. Only Leonora Christina's royal father, Christian IV of Denmark (1577–1648), to whom she likes to refer as both father and King[25] in order to accentuate her (semi-)royal lineage, remains an unassailable authority. This series of pathetic men stretches into *Jammers Minde*: she reencounters Jørgen Walter, an old enemy who had contributed considerably to her husband's downfall and who now is a prisoner himself, and finds him so appallingly pitiable that she asks to have a share of her food sent to his cell (Leonora Christina 1998, 168). Furthermore, she physically (and successfully) defends herself against the sexual advances of the alcoholic castellan (ibid., 140), and she remains unimpressed by the murder threats of an insane inmate, who is also the castellan's assistant, unlike her absolutely terrified maid (ibid., 154).

Female Rivalry

Leonora Christina's belittling portrayal of men has been interpreted as representing her disdain for autocracy: »Den enevældige magt og ondskab optræder direkte for Leonora Christina først og fremmest i skikkelse af en række mandspersoner, der forsøger at benytte sig af hendes formodede kvindelige svaghed« (Mai and Dalager 1983, 75). At the same, there have been voices in favour of a consideration of Leonora Christina's realistic portrayal of commoner women as an expression of sympathy, even solidarity, with these women, due to which Leonora Christina would not report their – at times criminal – behaviour to the tower administration (Schmalensee and Torp 1979–1981, 13 f.); a hypothesis which Annegret Heitmann (1989, 55) in turn has dismissed as historically questionable. There are substantial reasons to join Heitmann's position, one of them being the underlying narrative of *Jammers Minde*,

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24 In this context, it is worth mentioning that there are two other accounts of this adventurous flight, one written by Adolph Fuchs 1816, who – in direct opposition to Leonora Christina's version – presents Corfitz Ulfeldt as the driving force behind the escape plan, and another one supplied by Peter Pflügge (1816), whose statements coincide largely with Leonora Christina's account, but which – probably due to the nature of the text – adds little information regarding either Leonora Christina's heroism or Corfitz Ulfeldt's feebleness.

25 See, for example, Leonora Christina 1958, 11c, where she refers to Christian IV as »Roy mon Pere« with the explicit intention of humiliating an opponent.

in which Leonora Christina's fate lies entirely in the hands of God – a (reported) manipulation of her destiny, for example through a forceful removal of even the most insufferable maid, would have contradicted this narrative. Second, and more importantly, Leonora Christina's aristocratic mindset had most likely prevented any thorough identification with these women, as contended by Heitmann. Leonora Christina's depiction of her maids is indeed rather schoolmasterly-benevolent than truly appreciative.

To be sure, the women surrounding Leonora Christina in the Blue Tower, mostly commoners from rather humble backgrounds, are unequivocally depicted as inferior to Leonora Christina – either morally or intellectually (or both) – for reasons explained above. But it is also worth noting that at the same time, women with a rank corresponding to that of Leonora Christina are depicted as having a stronger will than their respective husband. This concerns, on the one hand, Queen Charlotte Amalie, consort of Christian V of Denmark and hence the daughter-in-law and successor of Leonora Christina's most notorious rival, i.e. her sister-in-law Queen Sophie Amalie. Charlotte Amalie is presented as showing sympathy for Leonora Christina's situation after visiting her in the Blue Tower in 1670 (Leonora Christina 1998, 177–179), and she even promises to speak on her behalf in front of her husband, the recently crowned King of Denmark. Her good intentions are, however, obstructed by Christian V, who at first is responsive to his wife's advocacy for Leonora Christina, but then reneges on his promises after his mother's intervention (ibid., 182).

Leonora Christina's narrative aims thus primarily at revealing and demonizing her most powerful opponent, who is not the King of Denmark, i.e. neither Frederik III nor Christian V, but in either case Sophie Amalie. This notion is confirmed by the events succeeding Frederik's death in 1670, which did *not* lead to Leonora Christina's release from the Blue Tower – this occurred only in 1685, the year of the Queen dowager's death. However, Leonora Christina, too, insinuates on numerous occasions that she holds Sophie Amalie personally responsible for her current situation. She recounts, for example, a conversation she led with the castellan in the first year of her imprisonment about the regal couple, in which she expresses respect and gratitude upon the castellan's mention of the King (Leonora Christina 1998, 76: »Gud beware hs Mt: hand er en goed Herre, maatte hand were goed for onde Mennisker«), while demonstratively remaining silent upon being nudged to say something similar about the Queen:

> Oc sagde hand da, Dronningen er oc saa goed; huortil ieg intet Suarte; Huorfor hand nu Dronningen wille føre paa tale, oc see om hand nogen Ord aff mig kunde drage: Sagde, Dronningen Beklager eder, att I saa haffuer laded eder forføre, I haffuer wult eder selffuer den Vlycke; ded giør hender Ont; Hun er eder icke Wreed, hun haffuer Medliidenhed med Eder. Oc saa som ieg intet Suarte *repeterte* hand ded igien, oc alt imellem sagde hand, Ia, Ia, mein liebes Frewlein, es ist so wie ich sage. Ieg var meget fortrøden offuer den Snack, sagde *Dieu vous punisse* (Leonora Christina 1998, 76).

Leonora Christina's allusions to the secret regency of her sister-in-law in combination with the obvious correlation between the length of Leonora Christina's prison sentence and her opponent's campaign of vengeance have almost irrevocably branded Sophie Amalie as a classic Evil Queen. In Ellen Jørgensen and Johanne Skovgaard's publication on *Danske Dronninger* (1910, 160), for example, the authors openly refer to the persistent damage inflicted on the collective recollection of Sophie Amalie: »Det er Sofie Amalies Forbandelse, at hendes Navn næppe kan nævnes, uden at Leonora Kristines samtidig kommer paa Læben«. Curiously enough, this popular opposition between Leonora Christina and Sophie Amalie – or in other words: between a faithful, obedient wife and a despotic hag – was at times interpreted in disfavour of Leonora Christina, for example in the novel *Leonora Kristina* (1895) by Herman Frederik Ewald (1821–1908), which laments Leonora Christina's lack of control over her rampant husband by comparing her to Sophie Amalie:

> Dernæst stod hun [Sophie Amalie] ingenlunde tilbage for Leonora i diplomatisk Snildhed og Viljekraft snarest over hende. Kongen laa for hendes Fødder, hun kunde faa sin Vilje med ham i alt undtagen i de store politiske Spørgsmaal, men til sidst var det dog hende, der drev ham til Handling ogsaa i dette Punkt. Leonora derimod var sin Mand underdanig, hans Vilje var hendes Lov, og uagtet dette taler til Ære for hendes Hjerte og viser, at hun havde en ædlere Natur og større Kvindeværd end Sofie Amalie, saa lammede det dog hendes Handlekraft. Hun ville have staaet højere, hvis hendes Kjærlighed havde kunnet gaa i Lag med hendes overlegne Evner, og intet vilde have været mere til Ulfeldts Gavn, end om hun havde kunnet faa ham for sine Fødder, saaledes som Dronningen havde sin Husbond (Ewald 1903, 141).

This different perspective on Leonora Christina's image as an unconditionally loyal wife raises the question whether Leonora Christina reprimands the castellan in the above quotation because he insists on a conversation about her accursed rival, or whether she rather resents him for expressing the notion that she should be pitied for having been misled by her husband.[26] Leonora Christina's proactive self-portrayal in the French autobiography suggests, at any rate, that she did not want to be remembered as a passive follower of Corfitz Ulfeldt. And Leonora Christina's documentation of a similar accusation (Leonora Christina 1998, 42: »Ihr seyt ein Frawens Mensh ein Schwaches Werckzeug, Die arme Weibes-Bilder seind bald verführet; Man thut ihnen auch nicht gerne was, wan sie die Warheit bekennen«[27]) indicates that this view on her had badgered her quite a bit.

She could, however, not avert a thoroughly gendered opinion of her entirely. In an article published in 1888 under the title 'Contra Leonora Christina', the author, Julius Lange, dismisses Birket Smith's eulogistic characterization of Leonora Christina as historically ignorant and naïve by revisiting statements in *Jammers Minde*, which indicate that Leonora Christina had had an ambiguous relationship with the truth[28] – a moral imperative whose validity, in Lange's view, was generally neglected in the seventeenth century: »Det kommer nu blot an paa, om Forfatteren regner tilstrækkelig med den store og væsentlige Differens, der skiller det 17de Aarhundredes Moral fra den der gælder, eller i alt Fald skulde gælde for vor Tid« (Lange 1888, 722). What is, however, more relevant in the context of a feminist reading of Leonora Christina's texts, is that Lange, very much like Ewald, concludes that in any case, she could not be held legally responsible for her deviations from the truth, since she was dutiful in observing her conjugal obligations (ibid., 728 and 739) and that as a

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26 This new perspective on Leonora Christina, in which her legendary loyalty is recast as female feebleness based on a weak will, offers yet another interesting, albeit contrastive, parallel to Monsen's *Jammersminne*, whose protagonist despises the memory of her husband's commiseration with her based on his traditional ideas of womanhood: »For å få det til syntes du daglig og høylydt synd på meg fordi jeg ikke fant meg selv som kvinne« (Monsen 1980, 29).

27 A modernized edition of *Jammers Minde* originally published by Otto Andrup in 1926 but subsequently revised by Vagn Lundgaard Simonsen and republished in 1986 translates this originally German statement as follows: »I er et Fruentimmer, et svagt Redskab. De stakkels Qvindemennesker er snart overtalte! Man giør dem og ikke gierne nogen Skade, naar de bekiender Sandheden« (Leonora Christina 1986, 48).

28 For example Leonora Christina's account of a maid called Lucia, who was brought to the Blue Tower and remained there out of what Leonora Christina's indicated was adamant loyalty to her mistress (Leonora Christina 1998, 268).

woman, i.e. a person lacking an objective understanding of justice, could not be considered criminally responsible for her actions (ibid., 728). This view seems to have been rather widespread in the eighteenth and nineteeth centuries; similar notions were expressed by Ludvig Holberg (1735), by the writer Friderich Christian Schönau (1753) and by the historian Hans Paus (1746–1747), all three of whom connect the question of Leonora Christina's culpability to her status as a (married) woman. Leonora Christina's writings, however, indicate that exactly such a view on her would have infuriated her.

Conclusion

Writers and scholars like Herman Frederik Ewald and Julius Lange, as well as Thomas Seiler, have referred to the considerable temporal and cultural distance separating Leonora Christina from most of her readers, which hinders a historically adequate understanding of Leonora Christina's life, which, in turn, was fundamentally determined by her relationship with her husband. It is by no means the intention or conclusion of the present article to refute such notions. Leonora Christina's writings, especially *Hæltinners Pryd* and Nina Karin Monsen's reinterpretation of this unlikely paradigm of an autonomous woman, suggest, however, that despite all justified references to the historically different situation of Leonora Christina, as compared to modern women, she could serve as inspiration to writers engaging with questions of femininity and equality; as concluded by Monsen's protagonist, »forholdet mellom mann og kvinne ligger *århundrer* [my italics] bak den almene utviklingen i vår sivilisasjon« (Monsen 1980, 28).

This, in turn, means neither that Leonora Christina had written her auto-/biographical works with the primary intention of demonstrating the equal capabilities of men and women in general; after all, there is ample evidence for Leonora Christina's true authorial intentions, which have been rightfully interpreted as having been aimed at a depiction of her individual self as superior to most men *and* women. However, as the above analysis suggests, a fundamental step in her strategy was to definitively refute the idea that she, as a woman, could possibly be inferior to anybody, including her husband, solely based on her sex. This in turn, has allowed for a reading of Leonora Christina's life and work in a feminist context, mainly *because* she herself might have viewed each and every one of the women

presented in *Hæltinners Pryd* as her very own predecessors. Through her self-portrayal as a uniquely gifted, and hence envied, person she could then establish a consistent narrative of persecution and supremacy, which in turn was fortified by her demonstrated loyalty towards her disgraced husband, who contrastively contributed to the depiction of her grandness by seeming terribly incompetent compared to his wife. Her semi-voluntary imprisonment appears thus as a truly Christian ordeal in a twofold sense, since she also alludes to her wifely duties which compel her to remain loyal to a »dydig Herre oc Hoßbonde«, who, however, is also indicated to have been not entirely blameless in his wife's suffering. Is this contradictory? Yes; but perhaps only in the eyes of a modern observer.

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