

Rooms to let: clergy widows operating rooming houses in eighteenth-century Sweden

Beverly Tjerngren

In the past several decades scholarly research on widows and widowhood in the early modern period has increased exponentially. Much work has been done to move our understanding beyond popular conceptions that so often reduce early modern widows to caricatures. The pitiful and impoverished mother with a pack of children dressed in rags, the privileged and imperious woman of inherited wealth, and the independent and sexually experienced "merry widow" are familiar tropes that have long obscured and over-simplified many and varied realities. Fortunately, the ever-increasing focus on widowhood has brought many of these realities to light and widowhood has been well established as an integral dimension of women's history.

Questions about women's agency – including inquiries into whether it even truly existed – were a key aspect of early studies of the lives of women of the past. While many compelling and fruitful discussions resulted from these questions, it is sufficient here to rely on Margaret Hunt's observation that early modernists now generally assume that women of the period were quite able to exercise agency.¹ Due to the prevailing abundance of court records, much research about the lives and conditions of widows in the past is rooted one way or another in legal concerns. The eighteenth century saw a proliferation of women of all social classes turning to the law courts, pursuing cases related to all manner of questions. This activity resulted in a rich historical record that has transformed our understanding of women's lives in earlier times.² Other legal documentation, such as probate inventories, wills, and tax and population registers, allows for the adding of further dimension to investigations of early modern women.

¹ For a good overview of considerations of women's agency in historical research, see Margaret R. Hunt, *Women in Eighteenth-century Europe* (Essex 2010) pp. 5–8.

² Hunt (2010) p. 5.

This sort of source material is endlessly valuable to historians, not least for the way that what starts out as a straightforward search through it for data so often leads into fascinating individual histories that do not fit neatly into established narratives and thus lead to questions we had previously not even considered asking. For instance, in his research on early modern Swedish towns, Dag Lindström has identified a gap between common assumptions about artisan and merchant widows who were allowed to continue their late husbands' businesses and the reality revealed by the historical record. Though it is often taken for granted that these widows simply maintained existing businesses, perhaps on a more modest scale, Lindström gives examples of a number of urban widows who actively and strategically changed, expanded, and renewed their businesses, transforming them into ventures of their own.³ In discussion of this "blind spot", he points to the lack of systematic, empirical studies into the details of the business operations of widows who managed workshops and commercial enterprises after their husbands' deaths. He contends that research of this sort should not be conducted solely from an aggregate perspective, but also must include in-depth micro-studies, which facilitate consideration of the many possible alternative approaches employed and are especially important in efforts to chart the terms of female agency.⁴

The present article has much in common with Lindström's work in both its focus on early modern urban widows and its call for methodical in-depth study of their operation of business enterprises following their husbands' deaths. It departs meaningfully, however, in its consideration of a group of widows who are as good as never considered as actors in the world of business and commerce of the eighteenth century: clergy widows. Further, the widows under consideration here had been the wives of rural parish rectors and during their marriages had spheres of influence quite removed from urban environs.

As a group, early modern clergy widows rarely figure as more than anecdotes in the historiography. To some degree, of course, this is due to the scarcity of source material that has generally plagued historians looking to illuminate the lives and conditions of women of the past. It is, however, also closely related to patriarchal attitudes within and about church matters that dismiss a clergy wife's relevance to society the moment she is no longer a wife. Once she was widowed, she was most often considered a problem to be solved rather than a capable actor in her own right.⁵

³ Dag Lindström, "Minding Her Own Business: Artisan and Merchant Widows in Eighteenth-century Sweden," in Astrid Wendel-Hansen, Katarina Nordström & Francisca Hoyer (eds.) *To Take Us Lands Away: Essays in Honour of Margaret R. Hunt* (Uppsala 2022) pp. 63–64.

⁴ Lindström (2022) pp. 63–64.

⁵ See, for example, Solveig Widén's *Änkeomsorg i ståndssambället: försörjnings- och understödsformer för prästänkor i Åbo stift 1723–1807* (Åbo 1988) and Ragnar Norrman's *Konserverade änkor och kvinnor på undantag. Prästänkornas villkor i Uppsala stift 1720–1920. Från änkehjälp till familjepension* (Uppsala 1993), for detailed discussions of societal concerns about and responsibilities for supporting clergy widows in eighteenth-century Sweden.

In Sweden, as in Europe generally during the early modern period, widows of peasants, artisans, tradesmen, and merchants often continued in their late husbands' occupations in some capacity, whether or not they married again. Dagmar Freist has likened the position of clergy widows in eighteenth-century Europe to that of widows of men from the "rising professions" of officeholders, doctors, and lawyers, observing that widows within these "educated middle classes" posed a special problem for early modern society and acknowledging that the experiences of widows from the urban middle and upper classes remain underexplored by historians.⁶ Further, the clergy widow was limited after her husband's death by the very ideal that had defined her societal role during her married life. It is well established that marriage was at the very heart of the early modern social order, and after the Reformation, clergy were not only *allowed* to marry, they were *expected* to marry.⁷ The clergyman's wife had at least as many expectations surrounding her conduct as her husband, and the wife of a rector was as important to the congregation as the rector himself was. Not only did she bear enormous responsibility for her own household and family economy, but she was to be a role model for the congregation as the community's leading homemaker. In many respects she was a symbolic mother in the parish just as her husband was a symbolic father.⁸ While she was expected to be an active participant in her husband's professional life during his tenure, as a widow she had no possibility of carrying on her late husband's occupation unless she remarried to another clergyman.

In early modern Sweden, when a parish rector died leaving behind a widow, the widow was entitled to a *nådår*, generally translated to English as a "year of grace" or "mercy year". This allowed her to continue living on the rectory and collect her husband's income for the remainder of his service year, up to and including 30 April, and also for the following year. In exceptional cases, most often concerning widows with dependent children and/or in dire financial circumstances, the widow could be granted a double *nådår*, allowing her an additional year to enjoy the benefits she had had as a rector's wife.⁹ Following this grace period, two scenarios were the most common: the widow either remarried, often to another clergyman, or she lived with an adult child or another relative as a member of his or her household. Not all clergy widows had these options, however – or if they did, they chose for whatever reason not to exercise them – and were relegated to living out their remaining years relying on charity.¹⁰

Though the preponderance of clergy widows did indeed find themselves in one (or more) of the above circumstances, some were able to carve out other

⁶ Dagmar Freist, "Religious difference and widowhood." In Sandra Cavallo & Lyndan Warner (eds.) *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Essex 1999) p. 168.

⁷ Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford 1989) p. 164.

⁸ Martin Giertz, *Svenska Prästgårdar* (Stockholm 2009) p. 76; Beverly Tjerngren, "God's Little Acre: Status and Power Manifestation on an Eighteenth-century Swedish Vicarage" (master's thesis, Uppsala University, 2014) p. 33.

⁹ Norrman (1993) p. 37; Tjerngren (2014) pp. 37–38.

¹⁰ Norrman (1993) pp. 341, 344.

lives for themselves. In a study of the conditions of clergy widows in the Swedish archdiocese in Uppsala, Ragnar Norrman found that an unexpectedly high number of them moved to Stockholm and Uppsala, even before these cities' population growth of the nineteenth century.¹¹ Despite providing only two examples to support his conclusions, he points to the "known" phenomenon of "many" clergy widows moving to the education centers with the intent to supply room and board to students, giving this as an explanation for the large number of rectors' widows moving to Uppsala specifically. This discussion is barely embarked upon before it is left behind, but the brevity itself can be interpreted as an implicit call for further study. The present article explicates that call by presenting three rectors' widows who rented out rooms in eighteenth-century Uppsala.¹²

This exploration was born of tidbits I have gleaned from the archival record throughout my years as a graduate student researching the social and cultural histories of Sweden's early modern clergy. Like every other historian I know, I have a collection of fascinating cases and side stories I have encountered along the way and set aside for later investigation. I came across Anna Elisabeth Höök, the first of the cases presented below, while researching my master's thesis, an examination of status and power manifestation among Sweden's early modern clergy in Teda parish.¹³ I had all but forgotten her until I encountered Aurora Diurberg, the third case presented here, in my ongoing dissertation work. It was with that discovery that I realized that what I had taken for merely a mildly interesting curiosity that I might look into when I had more time was in fact yet another gap in our knowledge about the business operations of early modern widows.

Anna Elisabeth Höök, young mother

Anna Elisabeth Höök was born in the early years of the eighteenth century, the daughter of an accountant at the royal court. In the early 1730s she married Teda rector Nils Ferner, who was at that time a recent widower with a daughter yet to reach two years of age. Ferner suffered from ill health and died in March 1744, leaving behind his pregnant wife and four minor children.¹⁴ Following her husband's untimely death, Höök applied for and was granted a double *nådår*, which allowed her to continue living at the rectory for an extra year beyond what was normally allowed.¹⁵

¹¹ Norrman (1993) p. 346.

¹² Two of these, Anna Elisabeth Höök and Christina Säfström, are also the examples given by Norrman in the cited study, though Höök was already known to me from my earlier research.

¹³ Tjerngren (2014).

¹⁴ Lars Otto Berg, *Uppsala stifts herdaminne, Trögds-Åsunda kontrakt 1593–1999*, Vol. 2, (Uppsala 2007) pp. 373–374; Tjerngren (2014) pp. 37–38; Åsunda häradsrätts arkiv F:1, nr. 86. Riksarkivet i Uppsala; Teda C:2, nr. 28. Uppsala riksarkiv.

¹⁵ Berg (2007) p. 37.

It is unclear what became of Höök and her young family immediately after they moved from the rectory, but the probate inventory drawn up after her death in March 1760 records that she owned a sizable property in Uppsala, not far from the cathedral. Under the heading "Immovable Property", the document reads:

A farmstead in the area of Fjärdingsroten and the Rosendal quarter, on S:t [Johannesgatan] at number 7, between the Madam Doctor Diurberg's and the metalsmith Master Lillias's properties, on freehold land, and consisting of a building toward the street with night chambers and attics above; there are 11 warm rooms, with a kitchen building in the courtyard, some of which are rented out and others are used by the owner. The entire property is in liveable condition, and there is also a cellar in good condition.

As well as these rooms, there are all necessary outbuildings on the property, such as sheds, stable and cowshed with attics and haylofts, as well as a lean-to and a small herb and vegetable garden. This entire property is valued at 3000 *daler kopparmynt*.¹⁶

There are no details in the inventory about how long Höök had owned the property, how she had acquired it, or what the fact of her renting out rooms might have looked like. I have written in an earlier work about the possibility of her having purchased the property with assets she inherited from her late husband, but that is merely speculation based on the relatively comfortable economic situation he left for his family.¹⁷

Ragnar Norrman's mention of Höök comes in the paragraph immediately following his contention that the relocation of many rectors' widows to Uppsala can be explained by their intentions to operate rooming houses for students there. He refers to the above entry from her probate inventory to identify her as one of the small percentage of the widows he investigated who owned property they could live on. He takes some liberty with the source material in writing that "most" of the house's rooms were rented out,¹⁸ though the document distinctly states only that "some [. . .] are rented out and others are used by the owner". Norrman offers no further information about Höök, but there is a clear implication in his work that she rented the larger part of her accommodations to students.

It is reasonable to assume that Höök moved from the rectory in Teda sometime after the spring of 1746, when the time allowed by her double *nådår* came

¹⁶ Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrat, FIIa:19, 200. Riksarkivet i Uppsala. "Fast Ägendom: En Gård uti Fjärdings Rotan och quarteret Rosendahl wid S:t Jans Gatan under No. 7 emellan Fru Doctorinnan Diurbergs och klensmeden Mstr Lillias Gårdar på fri och egna Grund belägna och består i en Byggning åth gatan med 11 st. kamrar, och Wind öfver, här uti äro 11 st Eldrum med kioks byggningen in på Gården, som dels äro uth-hyrde, dels af ägiararen nyttjas och äro alla brukbare, med en behållen Källare. Dessutan äro in på Gården alla nödige uth hus såsom Bodar, stall och fähus med vindar och Skullar öfver samt lider, jämte en liden Krydde täppa. Hela denna Gård och Ägendom värderes til 3000:-" (translation mine).

¹⁷ Tjerngren (2014) p. 38.

¹⁸ Norrman (1993) p. 347.

to an end. Unfortunately, parish records that might confirm or counter this assumption have not been preserved. In any case, she is recorded as having lived in Uppsala at the above address in the city tax registers from 1755 and 1760 (the only two years of her widowhood for which such records are preserved). In 1755 her tenants were a carpenter named Sandberg, the wife (or, likely, the widow) of an army clerk named Bratt, a bricklayer's servant named Lundström, a timberman for the castle named Garpin, and a visitor named Hanning.¹⁹ In 1760, the year of Höök's death, her tenants were listed as a visitor named Törns, the wife (or widow) of a glove-maker named Sahlbeck, the widow of a cavalryman named Westbeck, a tobacco worker named Ekeroth, and a carpenter named Sandberg (most probably the same Sandberg who was listed in 1755).²⁰ Conspicuously absent from this list of tenants is any mention of students. This might be explained, at least partially, by the fact that students were not required to pay taxes and they, along with others having this exemption – nobility and their servants, soldiers, children under age 15, and adults over age 63 – were not always recorded in these documents.²¹ It is also possible, of course, that students might have rented rooms from Höök in years for which there are no available records. As of now, however, we have no evidence to support that having been the case.

Christina Säfström, enigmatic wife and widow

Information about Christina Säfström is anything but plentiful. She was the widow of Eric Retz, who was rector in Järlåsa parish from 1720 until his death in 1731 at the age of 59.²² It is not clear when the couple married, but he is recorded to have had a child in May 1720, when he was curate in Järlåsa, with a woman named Elisabeth Wiebe.²³ The obvious assumption is that she was his wife, though I have found no record of the marriage nor any other mention of her. The birth record for this child reads, "the mother was Elisabeth Wiebe", which leads to the conclusion that she died in childbirth, though her death is not recorded in the parish death records for either 1720 or 1721.²⁴ Whatever the situation might have been, Säfström appears as sponsor at two local baptisms in June 1721, with the title "Madame Christina Säfström".²⁵ Use of this title signified that she was either a married or widowed woman,²⁶ though no documentation of her

¹⁹ Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, KI:1, nr. 3340. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

²⁰ Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, KI:1, nr. 3490. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

²¹ <https://carneck.se/mantalslangder/> Retrieved 5 September 2024.

²² Johan Erik Fant & August Theodor Låstbom, *Uppsala Årkestifts Herdaminne*, Vol. 4 (Uppsala 1843) p. 157; Järlåsa kyrkoarkiv, C:2, nr. 156. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

²³ Järlåsa kyrkoarkiv, C:2, nr. 111. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

²⁴ Järlåsa kyrkoarkiv, C:2, nrs. 111, 141–142. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

²⁵ Järlåsa kyrkoarkiv, C:2, nr. 114. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

²⁶ Henrik Ågren, "Från kategorisering till exkludering: Förändringar i titulerandets funktioner under 1700-talet", *Historisk tidskrift*, 139:1 (2019) p. 12.

marriage exists in the parish records. In January 1722 she welcomed a son with Retz, who was by that time rector of Järlåsa parish,²⁷ indicating the likelihood that the two were already married when she stood up at the baptism rites the summer before. It is somewhat curious that she was not referred to as *pastorskan*, or "pastor's wife", in the records (as she in fact was in when she played the same role at a baptism in October 1722),²⁸ but the solving of that riddle is outside the scope of this article.

Säfström's date of birth is unknown, but it can be safely assumed that she was significantly younger than her husband. Not only did she outlive him by forty-five years, but she bore him six children after he himself was over the age of fifty.²⁹ One of these children died at the age of one year,³⁰ but the 1843 *herdaminne* records that the couple had five children,³¹ suggesting that the others were all living when their father died in May 1731.³² No probate inventory has been preserved for Retz, meaning that we have no picture of family's economic situation following his death.

Norrman has identified Säfström as a rector's widow who owned property in Uppsala at the time of her death in 1776, and writes that we can assume that she "also" rented rooms to students.³³ The probate inventory drawn up after her death includes an entry under "Immovable Property" that reads:

Half ownership in the farmstead number 6 in the area of Fjärdingsroten and the quarter Biskopen, on freehold land, consisting of 9 warm rooms, and half-ownership of the brewing house, drying surface, stable and cowshed, 7 attics and haylofts, and an herb and vegetable garden, [valued at] 2000 [*daler kopparmynt*].³⁴

As in the case of Höök, there are no details about when or how the property came into Säfström's possession and no indication of how long she had lived there. Further, and unlike in Höök's case, there is no explicit mention of any of the rooms having been rented out. Immediately following the above entry, however, it is recorded under the heading "Outstanding Claims" that her estate is owed 75 *daler kopparmynt* for house (or building) rent, with no information given about the debtor or debtors.³⁵

²⁷ Järlåsa kyrkoarkiv, C:2, nr. 117. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

²⁸ Järlåsa kyrkoarkiv, C:2, nr. 120. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

²⁹ Järlåsa kyrkoarkiv, C:2, nrs. 117, 174, 184, 196, 204, 213. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

³⁰ Järlåsa kyrkoarkiv, C:2, nr. 153. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

³¹ Fant & Låstbom (1843) s. 157. A *herdaminne* is a collection of biographical information for all clergymen in a diocese from medieval times to the present. The information contained in them has been compiled from archival records, according to scholarly principles, by church historians.

³² Järlåsa kyrkoarkiv, C:2, nr. 156. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

³³ Norrman (1993) p. 347.

³⁴ Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, FIIa:25, nr. 307. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

"Hälften uti Gården No. 6 i Fjerding's Roten och Quarteret Biskopen, på fri grund, bestående af 9. Eldrum, och Hälften uti Brygghus, Torck-Plåt, Stall, Fåhus, 7. vindar och Krydd täppa, [värderad till] 2000 [*daler kopparmynt*]". (translation mine).

³⁵ Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, FIIa:25, nr. 307. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

The tax registers for the city of Uppsala are rather more forthcoming than other source material about Säfström. She first appears living at the address of Biskopen 6 in 1763, more than thirty years after she had been widowed. Registered with her there was a Miss Hindricksson.³⁶ In 1764 only Säfström's unnamed female servant and Miss Hindricksson are registered at the address (that is, Säfström herself is not recorded as living there), and in 1765 only Hindricksson and a small-scale merchant named Hybenett are listed.³⁷ The 1766 tax register sees Säfström reappearing at the address, this time with only Hybenett.³⁸ From 1767 the number of inhabitants registered there begins to increase. That year the widow of a smith named Eijert joins Säfström and Hybenett.³⁹ The tax register for 1768 is not preserved, but from 1769 until 1776, the year of Säfström's death, there are roughly a half-dozen people registered at the address every year. Säfström and Hybenett are constants throughout the period and several individuals are registered there for a number of consecutive years. Eijert's widow lives at the address from 1767 through 1773. Burgher Johan Thunberg and the widow of a burgher named Brundin are resident there from 1769 through 1773. In 1769 a woman identified as *Fru* Leijonskiöld is registered at the address. During these eight years, a variety of others – including a cavalryman, a fire watchman, a constable's servant, a factory commissioner, two different sextons, a shoemaker, and a soldier's widow – live at the address for longer and shorter periods.⁴⁰

I have not found documentation indicating who owned the other half of the property under discussion here, but I strongly suspect that it was Claes Hybenett. Not only did he live there before Säfström moved in, but he also remained resident there until 1782, six years after her death, which speaks to his having had a vested interest in the property.⁴¹ Further, it is recorded in Säfström's probate inventory that her daughter, Virginia Lucretia Retz, was married to Hybenett. It is not known when this marriage took place, and probate inventories have not been preserved for either Hybenett or his wife.

This is a case that has generated nearly as many questions as it has answered, but it has been resoundingly clear on the issue of rector's widows operating

³⁶ Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, KI:2, nrs. 250, 260. In this and nearly all tax-register documents, she is identified by her husband's surname, Retz. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

³⁷ Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, KI:2, nrs. 400, 540. Hybenett is listed at times with his first name, Claes or Clas, and his surname has a variety of phonetic variations. His occupation is variously listed as a small-scale merchant (*hökare*), a surveyor, and a burgher. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

³⁸ Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, KI:2, nr. 1980. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

³⁹ Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, KI:2, nr. 2200. Riksarkivet i Uppsala. The surname "Eijert" is rendered in these documents in a variety of spellings, but the identification of the person associated with it as the widow of a smith or farrier remains constant. In 1775 a woman with a similar surname is listed, but her late husband is not identified by occupation, and as the original Eijert's widow was absent from the register in 1774, I hesitate to assume it is the same person.

⁴⁰ Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, KI:2, nrs. 2390, 2610, 2900, 3070, 3330. Riksarkivet i Uppsala. Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, KI:3a, nrs. 370, 590, 760. Uppsala riksarkiv.

⁴¹ Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, KI:3a, nr. 1600. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

boarding houses. The evidence overwhelmingly supports the contention that Christina Säfström rented lodgings to a variety of people in late eighteenth-century Uppsala. But there is no evidence that she rented them to students. The caveat regarding students not always being named in the tax registers must of course be taken into account, but it was mandated in 1766 that all residents in a parish were to be included in the tax registers, regardless of their status as taxpayers.⁴² If there were students in residence at Säfström's property after that year, they ought to have been recorded in the tax registers, even if they hadn't been in earlier years.

Aurora Diurberg, Uppsala elite

Compared to the two women whose stories precede hers here, Aurora Diurberg is an open book. She was born in Uppsala in 1705 to Daniel Diurberg, an ordained clergyman and professor of theology who would ultimately become a doctor of theology and Cathedral Dean in Uppsala, and his wife, Margareta Theel, herself the daughter of a prosperous merchant.⁴³ In 1731 she married clergyman Johan Wiman, who became rector of the wealthy and influential Veckholm parish in 1739.⁴⁴ After a long and successful career, Wiman died in 1772 and Diurberg embarked upon her widowhood an affluent, respectable, and respected woman.⁴⁵

Much of Diurberg's wealth was tied up in land, including the property she lived on in Uppsala when she died in 1787. This property is described in the probate inventory drawn up after her death as "a farmyard in Uppsala, in the area of Svartbäcks Roten and the quarter Damkilen, at number 4, on freehold land, [valued at] 555.26 [*riksdaler*]"⁴⁶ There is nothing in this notation to suggest that Diurberg had been operating a rooming house on the property, and, apart from one short entry stating that a Magister Solenius owed her a small sum for rent of a house or building,⁴⁷ no evidence that she might have engaged in this sort of business at all. Having done earlier research on Anna Elisabeth Höök, however, I suspected that there might be a similar situation lurking in the background.⁴⁸

⁴² <https://carneck.se/mantalslangder/> Retrieved 5 September 2024.

⁴³ Lars Otto Berg, Magdalena Hellquist & Ragnar Norrman, *Uppsala stifts herdaminne, Trögds-Åsunda kontrakt 1593-1999*, Vol. 1 (Uppsala 2004) p. 64. Hilding Pleijel, "Daniel Djurberg", *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon* Band 1 (Stockholm 1945) p. 284.

⁴⁴ Berg, et al. (2004) p. 64.

⁴⁵ Berg, et al. (2004) pp. 64–69; Uppsala riksarkiv, Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, FIIa:28, nr. 296.

⁴⁶ Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, FIIa:28, nr. 296. "En i Upsala Stad, Svartbäcks Roten Qvarteret Damkiln, under N.o 4, å fri och egen gränd belägen Gord, [värderat till] 555,26 [riksdaler]". Riksarkivet i Uppsala. (translation mine).

⁴⁷ Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, FIIa:28, nr. 296. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

⁴⁸ The reader may recall that a neighbor of Höök's was a "Madam Doctor Diurberg". This was in fact Aurora Diurberg's mother, living out her own widowhood in Uppsala some twenty years earlier.

Aurora Diurberg first appears at the Damkilen property – ascribed the somewhat awkwardly-translated title “Widow Mistress Madam Dean Wiman” – in the city of Uppsala tax register from 1776. At that time the widow of the ship’s captain Pihlström was the only other person registered there.⁴⁹ In 1777, the widow Pihlström had been replaced by the curate Myrman’s widow.⁵⁰ Tax registers have not been preserved for the years 1778 and 1779, but the records from 1780 and 1781 list Diurberg sharing an address with a Miss Lovisa Ostman and the widow of an enforcement officer named Gritzell.⁵¹ By 1782 Miss Ostman had moved on and Diurberg and the widow Gritzell were the only two listed at the property.⁵² The 1783 record lists only Diurberg and a barge worker named Lars Lindquist, and in 1784 the two had been joined by the widow of a senior revenue officer named Solin.⁵³ 1785 saw the departure of the widow Solin and the arrival of a clergyman’s wife named Lexelia. That year a housemaid named Wahlberg was also listed under Diurberg’s name.⁵⁴ In 1786, the year before Diurberg’s death, she, Wahlberg, Lindquist, and Lexelia remained registered at the address and were joined by a “poor girl” named Ulrica and a widow named Brita Persdotter.⁵⁵ The entire duration of Diurberg’s widowhood falls after the mandate in 1766 that all residents, regardless of taxpayer status, were to be listed in the tax registers. In this case we can reasonably expect that if any students lived at her address they would have been listed in these documents, but still none appear.

Taken together, none of this information shows definitively that Diurberg rented out rooms in her home. Apart from Lars Lindquist, all of the people who shared an address with her were other women, and women who might have been calling on family or clerical connections in a time of need, or even imposing upon the obligate hospitality of a highly placed member of the clerical estate. Indeed, it might even be easily assumed that that her lifetime of public service and clear economic wellbeing prompted her to demonstrate an uncommon generosity in housing those less fortunate than she. Such a situation is rendered less likely by the fact that Diurberg had a certain reputation for miserliness. During her *nådår*, for example, the replacement pastor Lars Wretberg complained that she paid him so stingily that he found himself “facing the threat of bottomless debt”.⁵⁶ So, while hospitality was perhaps at least one factor in her providing accommodations for other widows, it seems unlikely that she would have provided it free of charge. These observations are certainly intriguing, but in order to move from the realm of speculation to something more substantial, other sources must be consulted.

⁴⁹ Riksarkivet i Uppsala, Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, KI:3a, nr. 660. “Enka Fru Probstinnan Wiman” is the title identifying Diurberg. (translation mine)

⁵⁰ Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, KI:3a, nr. 840. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

⁵¹ Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, KI:3a, nrs. 1030, 1270. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

⁵² Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, KI:3a, nr. 1490. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

⁵³ Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, KI:3a, nr. 1730, 1950. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

⁵⁴ Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, KI:3a, nr. 2140. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

⁵⁵ Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, KI:3a, nr. 2370. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

⁵⁶ Berg, et al. (2004) p. 68.

Whether due to the later time period, the higher profiles of the people in question, or sheer luck, I was relatively easily able to locate the enforcement officer whose widow lived at Damkilen 4 from 1780 to 1782. From his name, rendered in other records as Pehr Grisell, I found that his widow was named Brita Söderberg. She died in 1783 and the probate inventory compiled after her death has been preserved in the archival record. This document explicitly identifies her as Grisell's widow, all but guaranteeing that she is the woman in question. Near the end of the inventory there is an unpaid debt owed for "four years' house rental".⁵⁷ Including the last year of her life, she lived four years on Aurora Diurberg's property, making it eminently plausible that she was a paying boarder there.

I have thus far been less successful in identifying the others who lived there, but the case of Söderberg increases the likelihood that at least some of them also rented from Diurberg and were not merely living off her goodwill. As in the cases of Höök and Säfström, no students were ever listed as being registered at the property during the period of Diurberg's ownership.

Conclusion

This is an exploratory article with a two-fold aim: first, to reiterate the call for systematic methodical research into the agency of widows in the early modern period, highlighting the special circumstances of clergy widows and emphasizing the need for their inclusion in the examination of widows' business operations; and second, to begin to test the prevailing supposition that clergy widows in Sweden relocated to education centers with the intent of operating rooming houses for students. As to the first, I have demonstrated the importance of calling for more in-depth research in this area by presenting the cases of three clergy widows who were able to support themselves rather than relying on the traditional means of support for women in their position. Thus far, scholarly research into the lives of early modern clergy widows, both in Sweden and elsewhere, has been focused almost entirely on the vulnerability and economic uncertainty that often characterized their later years. Such research has certainly contributed much to our understanding of early modern society, but significant gaps remain in our knowledge. Systematic investigation into the phenomenon of clergy widows operating rooming houses and, perhaps, other business enterprises, would add a further layer of meaning to the study of widows' agency.

Concerning the second aim, I have demonstrated that any study of clergy widows operating rooming houses must be much more nuanced than easy answers allow for. The results of this exploratory study clearly contradict conclusions that have stood unchallenged for decades. Neither of the widows given as examples by Norrman to support his suggestion that clergy widows moved to the

⁵⁷ Uppsala rådhusrätt och magistrats arkiv, FIIa:27, nr. 178. Riksarkivet i Uppsala.

education centers with the express intent of renting rooms to students has been shown in fact to have done so. That is not to say unequivocally, however, that these or other clergy widows did not rent rooms to students in the eighteenth century. The most that can be said is that I have found no evidence for it. At the same time, in not having been able to confirm the rather narrow assumption advanced by Norrman, I have brought attention to a much wider area of interest. In the context of investigating business enterprises carried out by clergy widows, it ultimately matters little to whom these particular widows were renting rooms. The mere fact that the three widows described here can be demonstrated to have rented out rooms at all adds a great deal of weight to this call for more systematic research. It is surely possible, and perhaps even likely, that other clergy widows undertook other kinds of economic activities in order to support themselves and their dependents. It is well past time for us to start looking for the evidence.