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Books, Readers, and Reading in an Eighteenth-Century East Norwegian Parish

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Résumé de l'article

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“... BUT HE STAYED UP READING”: Books, Readers, and Reading in an Eighteenth-Century East Norwegian Parish

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ABSTRACT

With an ambition to add new knowledge on early modern reading culture in rural Norway, this essay zooms in on an eighteenth-century East Norwegian parish and conducts a detailed examination of various sources (church records, probate records, auction records, court records) to investigate how reading came into being and took place. Besides supporting previous conclusions about a widespread Scandinavian early modern rural literacy and a preponderance of religious books as owned, sold and bought by the rural population, the essay identifies a rural interest in books far exceeding the religious domain and an attraction to the materiality of books beyond reading. Moreover, court records disclose attitudes and practices related to reading and offer a promising avenue for generating further insights about how and why reading happened.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans la perspective d'enrichir les connaissances relatives à la culture de la lecture dans la Norvège rurale de l'époque moderne, le présent article s'intéresse au cas particulier d'une paroisse de l'est de ce pays au XVIII^e siècle. Un examen exhaustif de diverses sources (registres paroissiaux, de succession et de ventes aux enchères; archives de tribunaux) permet de cerner la manière dont se déployait l'acte de lecture. En plus de confirmer des conclusions déjà admises – à savoir l'importance accordée à la littérature dans la Scandinavie rurale de l'époque, et la prépondérance des ouvrages religieux parmi les livres achetés, vendus et possédés par la population –, l'article révèle un intérêt pour les livres qui allait bien au-delà du religieux, ainsi qu'un attrait pour l'objet livre qui transcendait la lecture. Qui plus est, les documents d'ordre judiciaire jettent un nouvel éclairage sur les attitudes et les pratiques relatives à la lecture, et constituent donc une piste prometteuse pour d'éventuels travaux sur le sujet.

Keywords

Eastern Norway; eighteenth century; reading education; book ownership; reading practices

Mots-clés

Norvège orientale, XVIII^e siècle, éducation à la lecture, propriété de livres, pratiques de lecture

In his response to a questionnaire distributed by the Bishop of Oslo in 1732 that concerned each parish's nature and character, the parish priest of Odalen, Peder Jensen Holter (c. 1654–1733), established his parish as utterly peripheral. He explained that “one knows nothing of any antiquities, remarkable or curious things, either now or in history, about this parish,” and went on to describe its topography:

The parish of Odalen, so named for its many brooks, rivers, and large lakes,¹ has a circumference of 63 miles and borders Nes to the west, Eidsvoll to the north-west, Stange and Romedal in Hedmarken to the north-east, Grue, Hof, and Vinger in Solør to the east, and Vinger's sub-parish, Eidskog, to the south. The many lakes, marshes, and mountains are the reason for the parish's considerable reach: the farms are scattered, and the churches are many and at a great distance from each other.

Holter described his travels within the parish as “very exhausting and cumbersome,” as they had to be undertaken “partly on horseback, partly on foot” over “mountains, marshes, brooks and rivers,” and they involved “poor food and bad lodging.” His rectory was situated by the river Glomma, 63 miles from Oslo, on the parish's main—and only—road, leading from the capital to the fortress of Kongsvinger.

The purpose of Holter's travels was not only to lead services in his parish's five churches, but to conduct house visitations to examine the parishioners' knowledge of Luther's catechism.² Describing these examinations, Holter frequently uses the verb “read,” which, without the attribute “from a book,” denoted “reading by rote.” This dual meaning—reading from a book versus by memory—is apparent in a passage where Holter, having admitted

15 adolescents to their first communion, observes that “they could all read well and almost all of them from a book.”³

In this essay, I explore how reading came into being and took place among the rural population in eighteenth-century Odalen. I draw on actor-network theory in order to keep as close as possible to the empirical evidence and avoid reducing the actors and actions involved to “mere reflections of an underlying or determining context.”⁴ But rather than conducting a fully-fledged actor-network analysis, I will apply this approach to my sources. As Bruno Latour points out, archival sources are silent and without any noticeable effect unless they are tracked down, brought to light, and made to talk.⁵ Documents produced for entirely different purposes than accounting for reading instruction, book ownership, and reading practices may incidentally reveal fresh insights about just those things. They can become “mediators” which modify “the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry”;⁶ they offer moments of surprise with the capacity to uncover the workings of actors and actions. For this reason, I will pay particular attention to instances where my sources disclose surprising and unexpected ideas and connections.

The sources I have used in my quest to learn more about reading in eighteenth-century Odalen include parish registers and other types of church records, probate records, auction records, and court records, complemented with stray findings. Some of these source types—notably probate and auction records—have already been examined in relation to the history of books and reading,⁷ while others have not, and it is my aim with this study to consider the new insights that emerge when these sources are explored together.

Reading Instruction

Having visited Odalen in 1620 and examined the parishioners’ knowledge of Luther’s catechism, the Bishop of Oslo, Nils Simensen Glostrup (c. 1585–1639), noted that the local youth was highly ignorant. Fifteen years later, he found the situation to be satisfactory.⁸ Glostrup may have urged Odalen’s parishioners to adopt the same pedagogical practice he had recommended in Sørum in 1625 and again in Hedmarken 10 years later: that children who “could read from books” or had made progress in explaining Luther’s

catechism, should, every Saturday afternoon, teach “their neighbours’ children.”⁹ In other words, he believed that children should teach each other. If this practice was indeed implemented, it may have had far-reaching effects on the social distribution of literacy.¹⁰

Ever since the Dano-Norwegian reformation (1537),¹¹ Luther’s catechism had been a cornerstone in the dissemination of Lutheran Christianity, supported by an educational ambition to give children and youth regular catechism instruction, which was simply referred to using Luther’s own term, “childhood knowledge.” Initially, no obligation to develop reading skills was imposed; children were merely to listen, imitate, and learn by heart.¹² At the time when Bishop Glostrup visited Odalen, a new conservative Lutheranism—known as Lutheran orthodoxy—became highly influential. It was accompanied by a campaign of religious and political discipline, which continued throughout the seventeenth century, to teach the catechism, not only so that people would learn it by heart, but so that they would develop an understanding of its contents. To this end, reading skills were an essential tool.¹³ Knowledge of Luther’s catechism was a precondition for attending communion, which again was of crucial importance since it implied adult status, both within the church and in society.¹⁴

Leaving aside the general picture and turning now to concrete sources, how did Odalen’s rural population respond to and negotiate the state’s requirements? Which strategies did the local authorities apply to make these requirements a reality, and what concrete practices did this transition actually bring about?

A case from the court record of 1681 indicates that a shift from predominant illiteracy to relative literacy occurred in Odalen during the seventeenth century. In the case, Gunder Amundsen Føsker (c. 1626–1682), a major farmer and sheriff in Odalen, went to court to demand payment of debt. After some discussion, he settled for only half the sum, acknowledging the possibility of a misunderstanding since his father-in-law, Høgne Gislesen Ellingsrud (c. 1604–1677), who had lent the money in the first place, “had not known how to read and write.”¹⁵ Gunder’s statement suggests that he, unlike his father-in-law, was literate, and Gunder’s son, Høgne Gundersen (c. 1672–c. 1737), was listed among those who knew how to read “from a

book.”¹⁶ By 1699, the majority of the 15 young people—seven girls and eight boys—whom the parish priest, Holter, admitted to their first communion also knew how to read from a book. More than half came from utter poverty: their parents were crofters, one boy was the illegitimate son of a maid, and one girl the daughter of Finnish immigrants. This situation suggests that the ability to read was relatively evenly distributed among different levels of society, which in turn begs the question of how these youths’ reading skills were acquired. Under what circumstances had they learned to read “from a book”?

A scenario where both the father and son were literate—as with Gunder Amundsen and Høgne Gundersen above—may indicate that the acquisition of reading skills was a family concern. Records suggest, however, that the actual instruction of reading in Odalen involved persons external to the family. For example, the bailiff’s fining list from 1630–1631 indicates that Ole Fulu (died c. 1644), also a major farmer and sheriff in Odalen, paid a fine on behalf of his servant, who had fathered an illegitimate child and whose work it was to “teach his [Ole’s] children.”¹⁷

Others referred to their instruction as “school,” a term that historically covered a wide variety of different educational situations.¹⁸ Ingel Kristoffersen Trauten (c. 1654–1728), who was raised at a major farm but ended up a poor crofter, stepped forward as a witness in a court case about the hereditary right to a farm nearby and incidentally mentioned that he had been “16 years old when he attended school.”¹⁹ Ingel’s contemporary, Iver Eriksen Øyen (c. 1659–1737), who also came from a major farm, said that he had “attended school” at another farm in the vicinity.

Iver’s statement is of particular interest because he identified the material used in reading instruction. He went to court to announce that his family had lost important documents concerning their property when Swedish soldiers looted their farm during the last war (i.e., 1675–1679), and he added that he knew these documents well since they had been used as material when “he learned how to read.”²⁰ The fact that old handwritten property documents were used to teach reading implies a pragmatic approach: one used whatever material was at hand—and not necessarily religious texts. Iver’s statement may also suggest that writing—imitating the handwritten

documents—was also part of his schooling, particularly as later records mention Iver’s writing skills.²¹

Both Ingel’s and Iver’s statements seem to imply some sort of collective effort. Farmers may have joined together to pay for their children’s instruction, although the records only reveal individual payments. From the middle of the seventeenth century, Odalen’s parish priest also had the support of a deacon who travelled across the parish and examined its parishioners, mainly the youth.²² At the probate assembly after the death of Tosten Tostensen Duåsen (c. 1628–1689), a minor farmer in Odalen, a debt of one *daler*—approximately the value of one quarter of a cow—was registered to Deacon Jens Christensen Hafrbjerg (c. 1641–1723) for “teaching children.”²³ Similarly, after the death of Ragnhild Bergersdatter Herrud (c. 1647–1710), housewife at a middle-sized farm, the evaluators registered a debt of five *daler* to the schoolmaster Ole Pedersen.²⁴ In the parish register, in Holter’s lists of those attending communion, various schoolmasters appear continuously from the late seventeenth century until the 1730s. Among them was Torger Iversen Føskerud (c. 1646–1716), a former soldier and life-long bachelor living at a minor farm, who according to Holter’s burial entry “had been schoolmaster in the parish.”²⁵ Apart from Johan Jönsson, “Swedish schoolmaster,”²⁶ reportedly born in the Swedish city of Borås and originally a servant of the director of the local copper works, all schoolmasters were recruited locally—and were often chosen from among those who were unable to perform manual labour. Although Holter’s communion lists show no traces of female schoolmasters, in a report to the bishop on the matter, Holter wrote that

teachers for the youth are men and women born in the parish who are either burdened with weakness or bodily disabled so that they can do no other work than teach children to read Danish.²⁷ Instruction goes on in those periods of the year when the youths are free from pasturing cattle, from spring and autumn work.²⁸

The records reveal that a general statutory obligation for children and youth to acquire “childhood knowledge” transformed into a strong expectation—subject to strict social control—that resources should be spent on children’s instruction. In 1682, Berte Pedersdatter Hornes (c. 1636–1694), a housewife at a middle-sized farm, was summoned to court by her former

mother-in-law, who accused Berte and her new husband of wasting the inheritance of her son from her first marriage, Ole Torgersen (ca. 1670–1717). Berte Hornes insisted in court that her son’s “inheritance is intact and by no means wasted,” and assured her opponent that she “keeps the son in school.”²⁹ Similarly, in 1705, the guardian of the children left by Nils Bergersen Østmoen (c. 1652–1704) was assigned to “look carefully after the children and make sure they are taught their childhood knowledge.”³⁰ At the probate assembly after the death of Ole Pedersen Duåsen (c. 1663–1718), his widow, Mari Eriksdatter (c. 1685–1723), who was his second wife, demanded that funds from the estate should be granted for her children’s “school attendance ... just like the deceased man’s other children [her step-children] had enjoyed.”³¹ In some cases, farmers also paid for their servants’ instruction as part of their wages. In 1758, after the death of Anne Pedersdatter Slåstad (1713–1758), the servant Peder Hansen (1721–1801) demanded seven *daler* in remaining wages but was granted only three *daler* since Anne’s husband, Sjønne Gulbrandsen (1709–1765), had “paid for his childhood knowledge.”³²

While most farmers in Odalen were connected through a network of family ties, shared expectations, and relatively similar access to resources, crofters often lacked the funds to pay for their children’s instruction and were dependent on charity. Fifteen ABC books sold at the probate auction after Holter’s death in 1733 were probably the material remnants of a project Holter had launched to meet the needs of Odalen’s poor inhabitants.³³ Holter’s initiative may have been a response to another local project undertaken by Laurits Pedersen Sverdrup (1623–1695), parish priest in Vang and dean of Hedmarken, who in 1683 had set up a school “for poor children’s instruction and support,”³⁴ in line with general ideas in Protestant northern Europe at the time about schools for the poor.³⁵ In a report to the bishop, Holter explained that, before the last years of the war (i.e., 1709–1718), he had established a school at a croft belonging to his rectory and employed a Danish schoolmaster, Hans Christensen Vig (c. 1658–1712), to teach “crofters’ and poor people’s children.” Hans Vig had earlier been a private tutor for the children of Odalen’s wealthy innkeeper, Peder Andersen Winger (c. 1640–1719), and was therefore most likely a former university student.³⁶ Holter’s choice of a non-local, university-educated schoolmaster, as well as the use of the ABC books, which departed from the

local utility-driven approach to reading instruction at the time, suggest that Holter wanted to lend the school a formal status.

Holter's school was an institution of both education and charity, and relieved poor families of mouths to feed, at least for a time. It was a boarding school, where the children were provided with lodging and food cooked by the schoolmaster's wife, Kirsten Enersdatter (c. 1675–1722), formerly a maid for the commander's wife at the fortress of Kongsvinger.³⁷ Holter supplied the school with bed-clothing, and its operation was otherwise financed by the parishioners,³⁸ and occasionally also by fines imposed by the court. For example, in 1704, Svend Jonsen Vestby (c. 1662–1737), a minor farmer, was found guilty of having arranged games and double, and sentenced to pay a fine of three *riksdaler* to “the school the current parish priest Peder Holter has established for poor people's children.”³⁹ After they had learned how to read “from a book” and had been examined by Holter, one group of children would leave the school and a new group would be enrolled. Although the school operated for only 10 years, from 1702 to 1712, its effects on the distribution and progress of literacy skills must have been considerable. Former pupils are likely to have passed their knowledge on to their own children and other children in the vicinity.

At the time of Holter's death in 1733, pietistic Lutheranism, which emphasized spiritual rebirth through the transformation of sincere belief in God into practice and individual piety, gained momentum in Denmark-Norway. The movement's focus on schooling met the administrative and political needs of the absolutist state and brought about the introduction of Confirmation (1736) and the General School Act (1739).⁴⁰ Records reveal that, apparently as a local response to the new legislation, schooling in Odalen became more formally organized in this period. From the 1740s on, six or seven schoolmasters were available in the parish.⁴¹ Notably, although the School Act saw farmers' sons as the least desirable candidates for teachers, all except one of the schoolmasters in Odalen were sons of farmers and crofters. The remaining schoolmaster, meanwhile, was of a category explicitly banned by the School Act: a woman.⁴² Her name was Marte Andersdatter, and she worked as a schoolmaster for at least two decades—and on the same financial terms as her male colleagues. This arrangement reflects the results of an amendment

to the School Act (1741), which was prompted by complaints about the original act's too ambitious goals and instead made schooling entirely the concern of the local community under the leadership of major farmers and the parish priest.⁴³

At the end of the eighteenth century, Odalen's parish priest, Peder Schwane Bang, decided to establish local "school statutes." In 1783, he called a meeting with representatives of the local community and the authorities, the outcome of which was that schooling would still be itinerant, but it would now be financed through a dedicated school tax calculated according to each farm's size. The parish would have eight teachers who would teach eight days on each farm, where they would receive food and lodging. The children were to be taught how to "read correctly and articulately from a book" in order to understand Luther's small catechism.⁴⁴ In 1784 alone, Luther's catechism—still the basic book used in reading instruction⁴⁵—was distributed to more than 50 poor families in Odalen, according to Bang's entries in the accounting book for "schools and the poor."⁴⁶

Information assembled from heterogeneous sources reveals that reading instruction was given continuously in Odalen from the seventeenth century on. The records disclose a pragmatic approach in response to state requirements, both with respect to human resources and to reading material. Community leaders tended to engage as teachers whoever was available and to use as material whatever was at hand, and the timing of instruction was determined by the pace and needs of seasonal work. The parish priest's charitable initiative to offer access to reading instruction to children from poor families was, albeit short-lived, considerably more in line with state requirements than the itinerant model. Taken together, the flexible pragmatic model and Holter's more formal reveal the widespread dedication to reading instruction. Having thus established how reading skills were acquired in Odalen, I will now follow the phenomenon of reading into the area of reading materials: books.

Books

Despite the availability of reading instruction in the parish, probate records for Odalen—preserved from 1683 on—list few books in few estates

throughout the eighteenth century, although slightly more in the second half of the century than in the first. Probate records—estate inventories—are frequently used to study book ownership and establish a link to the owners’ literacy and reading practices.⁴⁷ Viewed through this lens, the eighteenth-century parishioners of Odalen would have to be considered predominantly illiterate. Apart from a few postils, Bibles, and hymnbooks, some of them of Swedish provenance, the records list primarily prayer and devotional books such as Lauritz Ernst von Baden’s *Himmelstie* (“Heavenly Ladder,” 1670), Philip Kegelius’s *Tolff aandelige Betænkninger* (“Twelve Spiritual Meditations,” 1674), Johan Lassenius’s *Bibelske Wirach* (“Holy Scent of the Bible,” 1688), and Hans Jacobsen Hvalsøe’s *De Bedendis aandelige Kiæde* (“Spiritual Chain of the Praying People,” 1700). There is also a book against speaking profanely, Georg Albrecht’s *Laas for Munden og Tømme for Tungen* (“Lock for the Mouth and Bridle for the Tongue,” 1705), and Petter Dass’s *Katekismesanger* (“Catechism Songs,” 1715) and *Evangeliesanger* (“Gospel Songs,” 1722)⁴⁸—Luther’s catechism and the Gospels versified and intended for singing.⁴⁹ Thus, though book ownership in Odalen was modest, the subject matter supports what we know about the Lutheran North perfectly: the books were almost exclusively religious, indicating their owners’ religious reading.⁵⁰ Moreover, the presence of these books, all from the period of Lutheran orthodoxy, reflects the development of vernacular book production, with editions published in affordable smaller formats aimed at popular reading audiences.⁵¹ Also, the selection of books may be seen as an effect of the religious education, where the first step was learning Luther’s catechism, and the next reading devotional literature.⁵²

A problem with using probate records as evidence of book ownership is that they register the estate of at best one third of deceased persons, which means that they only cover a minority of the population.⁵³ And, as Roger Chartier points out, access to print materials cannot be “reduced simply to the possession of books,” and neither can “the private possession of books ... adequately indicate the frequency with which printed texts were utilized by those who were too poor to have their own ‘library.’”⁵⁴ Moreover, an estate’s value was determined in part through an evaluation of its movables. Consequently, heirs and creditors were paid off with movables: a cow, a chest, a book—or a share of a valuable item, such as a book. For example, probate records show that Lars Finnsen Rud (c. 1684–1748) was the owner of one half of a Bible,⁵⁵ and Anne Pedersdatter Slåstad

(1713–1758) and her husband had owned one third of a Bible.⁵⁶ As movables, books thus often travelled—and ended up in people’s homes—for reasons other than the desire to read them.

Probate records are therefore limited not only in that they represent only a minority of the population, but also in that they have little to tell about the possible reasons for a book’s presence in a household. However, auction records may make up for this evidential shortcoming. Attending an auction to spend money on a book arguably implies at least some individual interest in reading, and might therefore give us a better picture of literacy than the probate records. The auction records for Odalen—preserved from 1753 on—reveal, however, that probate auctions at farms and crofts only included books to a strikingly small degree, and when books were indeed auctioned (and listed using an identifiable title), they were more or less the same types of books as those registered in probate records. Postils, Bibles, hymnbooks, and other religious books were offered for sale and bought by the deceased person’s fellow farmers and crofters, most often for a few *skilling*.

Some probate auctions took place after the death of a priest, chaplain, or official. These auctions often offered books in a great variety of genres and on different topics. They attracted educated buyers from other parishes and regions, but Odalen’s farmers and crofters also showed up and bought books. At the auction after the death of Odalen’s chaplain Bent Bentzon (1748–1787), son of the former parish priest, more than 430 books were auctioned off. Bentzon’s colleagues bought most of them, but 20 books were bought by local farmers and crofters. As usual, their selections were dominated by religious books, but now predominantly from the periods of pietistic Lutheranism and the Enlightenment. Some bought Bibles, the editions of kings Christian IV, Christian V, Frederik IV, and Christian VII. The farmer Kristoffer Nilsen Børstad (1749–1836) paid more than two *daler*—the value of about half a cow—for the two-volume edition of *Christian IV’s Bible*, by far the most expensive book bought by any farmer or crofter. Embret Larsen Stormoen (1748–1811), a farmer at a major farm, bought Hans Mossin’s two-volume *Forklaring over anden Mose-Bog* (“Explanation of the Book of Exodus,” 1744), Christian Michael Rottbøll’s *Den rette Betalning for Guds ubetalelige Velgierninger* (“Right Payment for God’s priceless Charities,” 1773), Johan Christian Schönheyder’s *Underviisning i*

Christendommen (“Instruction in Christianity,” 1774), and a liturgical book. The crofter Erik Amundsen Trøhaugen (1758–1807) bought Georg Friedrich Seiler’s *Religion for Umyndige* (“Religion for Young People,” 1776), and his neighbour, Amund Høgnesen Garvik (1755–1829), a farmer at a middle-sized farm, bought Peder Bering Gjørup’s *Den christelige Religions Trøst* (“Consolation of the Christian Religion,” 1766) and the English Puritan Daniel Dyke’s *Hjertets Selfbedragelse eller Selfbedragelses Hemmelighed* (“Mystery of Self-Deceiving,” 1706).⁵⁷ Apparently, the circle remained closed: virtually all books changing hands among farmers and crofters were of a religious nature.

However, the auction records reveal, unexpectedly, that farmers and crofters also bought very different books from the religious books traditionally associated with them. But the view that certain texts are specific to certain groups, as Roger Chartier argues, is reductive, since it ignores “the process by which a text takes on meaning for those who read it.”⁵⁸ The crofter Anders Nilsen Lystad (1754–1840) bought the autobiography of the Dano-Norwegian writer and historian Ludvig Holberg, *Prof. Ludw. Holbergs Ljef og Lefnets Beskrivelse* (1741), and another crofter and coachman, Ole Bosen Lund (1736–1803), purchased two volumes of *Extract af det Kongelige Svenske Videnskabs Academies Handlinger* (“Extract of the Proceedings of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences”). Another crofter, Amund Gjestsen Slåstadbråten (1757–1837), bought *King Christian V’s Norwegian Law* (1687); the farmer Ole Isaksen Stumoen (1756–1832) bought Snorri Sturluson’s *Norwegian Chronicle*, Arild Huitfeldt’s *Danish Chronicle*, a “dissertation with copper engravings on the kingdoms’ arms, flags and orders” and a few music sheets. The farmer Gulbrand Amundsen Melgarden (1770–1828) purchased *Holbergs Historie over Berømmelige Mænds Bedrifter* (“Holberg’s History of Famous Men’s Deeds,” 1739), the farmer Gulbrand Gjestsen Spikset (1754–1813) bought two books on economics, and the farmer Kjøstel Knutsen Kuggerud (1744–1821) bought two books on arithmetic, *Fortegnelse over Land Huusholdning Selskabet* (“Record of the Royal Danish Society for Agriculture”) and “Danish newspapers for 1797 and 1798.”

Kjøstel Kuggerud also made a rather puzzling purchase: “four old German books.” However, he was far from the only farmer or crofter to buy books in a foreign language. The crofter Lars Larsen Kjernli (1754–1816) bought

Eberhard Carl Friedrich Oppenheimer's German translation of the Song of Solomon, *Das hohe Lied Salomonis* (1750), and the farmer Lars Torkildsen Skjulstad (1724–1818) purchased sermons in German by Johann Konrad Feuerlein and Johannes Grothus. The farmer Tosten Knutsen Hornes (1758–1818) bought Luther's hymnbook and gospel in German with copper engravings, and his neighbour Ole Isaksen Stumoen (1756–1832) bought theological treatises in German by Georg Möbius and Heinrich Becker. Others went even further: the farmer Ole Halvorsen Haukerud (c. 1748–1804) purchased a "large Bible in Latin," and the servant Søren Hansen (1764–1822) bought a book in Latin by Ludwig Lucius.⁵⁹

How can we make sense of these unexpected purchases? Odalen's eighteenth-century farmers and crofters hardly knew German, let alone Latin. The case of one particular book—although in Danish—sold at Bentzon's probate auction in 1787 might shed light on the matter. Ole Olsen (1731–?), a poor tenant at the farm Illgo, appeared at this auction and spent one *ort* and one *skilling* on Iver Brinck's *Death Sermon over the Body of Berthe Scheel* (1720).⁶⁰ Apart from being "the first and largest" book—its format was in folio—produced by the Phønixberg printing house in Copenhagen, this book has been described as "marvellously designed."⁶¹ Perhaps Ole was simply struck by the book's beauty and driven to buy it primarily out of a desire to possess a beautiful object? Ole's fellow crofters and farmers might have been motivated to buy books that they could not read for similar reasons. Their purchases draw attention to the materiality of books and the appropriation of books for purposes "which are not necessarily interpretations."⁶² As material objects, books appeal to the senses; one can admire their binding, print, and illustrations, touch them and leaf through them, discover the traces of previous owners, show them to visitors, talk about them. Books trigger the imagination and establish a dialogue with the world.⁶³ As immutable mobiles,⁶⁴ objects with the ability to move unchanged through time and space, books make it possible to cross temporal and spatial borders and bring the world into one's house, carrying with them an atmosphere of mystery and enigma. As such, in eighteenth-century Odalen, books were also status symbols. Owners would put their books on display to give themselves an air of worldliness—an effect which was not limited to books in foreign languages. Indeed, bookshelves are listed in both probate records and auction records, first in 1737,⁶⁵ and then more frequently in the second half of the century. On

several occasions, bookshelves are registered among the movables in estate inventories without any books listed, which nevertheless indicates that books must have been present in the household.

Most books in eighteenth-century Odalen—as found in probate and auction records—were in a language the rural population understood, but neither the probate records nor the auction records provide any evidence concerning reading. Keeping the material books in mind, I will now trace the phenomenon of reading into reading practices: into how readers actually interacted with books.

Readers and Reading

Data about reading practices can sometimes be elusive, but helpful insights might emerge from a surprising source: court records. Cases concerned with crimes and other offences could be understood as what Bruno Latour calls “network interruptions.”⁶⁶ They are, in various ways, irregularities, departures from the norm, and as such, they uncover the invisible workings of the regular. In other words, court cases expose actors and actions that would otherwise—if a crime or offence had not been alleged or committed—remain unknown and undiscovered.⁶⁷ In the courts of eighteenth-century Norway, witness statements were crucial, and witnesses often went into great detail in describing their experiences. Mediated in the sense that an oral account was transcribed to become a handwritten document, the statements nevertheless provide important insights into how people reflected on themselves and the world, and into their attitudes and practices—occasionally even reading practices.

In 1738, Berger Amundsen Oppåsen (c. 1698–1741), a minor farmer in Hof on the border with Odalen, was accused of having arranged a feast involving many people and drunkenness on the third day of Pentecost. Berger went to court and explained that his neighbours had helped him with spring work and that he therefore had wanted to repay them by treating them with food and drink. He insisted, though, that there had been no extensive drinking and that the drinks were only to accompany the food in the late evening. Before that, in the afternoon, he “had held prayer and reading from a postil, as there had been no service in their church that day.”⁶⁸ Communal reading aloud of a sermon from a postil, a passage from Luther’s catechism, the

Bible, or other religious texts was a well-known early modern reading practice; in Denmark-Norway, a church regulation in 1630 established the principles for “home worship” and thus extended the church’s service into people’s homes.⁶⁹ Berger Oppåsen argued that his reading from the postil had taken place as a substitute for a service in the local church. In eighteenth-century Odalen, the parish priest—in some periods assisted by a chaplain—operated five churches. While there were frequent services in the main church next to the rectory, the churches in the sub-parishes were left without services on many Sundays and holidays throughout the year. This situation most certainly made communal religious reading widespread, encouraging vivacious devotional practices among farmers and crofters, and would later form the foundation for the Haugean church reform movement towards the end of the eighteenth century.⁷⁰ A material trace of this reading practice is found in the record of a probate assembly at the minor farm Duåsen in Odalen in 1718, where a postil was described as “old and in pieces,” thus implying extensive use.⁷¹ Even Berger Oppåsen’s postil seems to have been of some age; it was found among the movables of his father’s estate in 1718.⁷²

By no means, however, did these powerful communal reading practices rule out individual reading. In the late evening on the third day of Christmas in 1746, a coachman travelled on a horse-drawn sleigh along the main—and only—road through Odalen, carrying 300 *riksdaler* to the fortress of Kongsvinger. At one point, he had to cross the river and went to the nearby farm of Ole Eriksen Korsmo (1700–1767), who agreed to help him. The ice was thin and the sleigh with 300 *riksdaler* ended up in the water—but was later retrieved. When interrogated, Ole Korsmo was asked how late it was when the coachman had come to his house. Ole replied that it was so late “that all his people had gone to bed, but he stayed up reading.”⁷³ Although Ole Korsmo said nothing of what he was reading, the circumstances are telling: Ole was reading to himself, and silently so as not to wake his family and servants, who had already gone to bed. As it was late evening in the middle of the winter, lighting would have been needed to be able to read, and Ole was probably reading in the light from the open fireplace—pine torches gave insufficient and too short-lasting light for reading, and candles were unusual, except in extraordinary situations. Because it was during Christmas, Ole may have read in candlelight, which again may indicate that Ole’s reading was unusual, perhaps an act of “Christmas reading.”

Another court case, concerning dramatic events in Odalen's neighbouring parish Romedal, reveals still more views of reading. In March 1749, Ole Jensen, a boy of about 10 years of age, was found frozen to death in the snow. Ole was the son of poor crofters and worked as a servant at the major farm Skøyen, where Johanne Johannesdatter was housekeeper for the unmarried owner, Nils Olsen Skøyen (c. 1713–1768). Ole's parents wanted the court to establish to which degree Johanne could be held responsible for Ole's death. A witness explained that one day, after supper, Johanne had given Ole "a shirt and a book" and ordered him to go home to his parents despite the strong wind and snow drifts. Five days later he was found dead. It turned out the book—and reading—had played a main part in the tragedy. Ole's parents had "sent him to Skøyen with a book to read." This act had upset Johanne, who "could not abide and did not think there was any time for" reading—and so she sent both the boy and the book home in the cold.⁷⁴ Besides confirming the impression that literacy was relatively evenly socially distributed, Ole's reading in a book tells something important about his parents' attitude. Giving their son a book to occupy his leisure time with reading, they demonstrated a belief that reading was an essentially respectable and beneficial activity, not a waste of time, and perhaps also revealed a desire to support his schooling and prepare him for confirmation, so that he could become a full member of the community. Johanne's attitude seems to have been of a completely opposite nature. Her strong dislike for reading seems to have been associated with the notion that reading takes time and attention away from work, thus linking reading to work-shyness, and by extension, to the idea of reading as a practice for the socially privileged, unsuitable for the son of poor crofters.

In 1706, Dorte Kristoffersdatter (c. 1686–1706), daughter of the master at a sawmill and maid at the middle-sized farm Fresvoll in Odalen, was found dead in the river Glomma after having been missing for several months. Her parents suspected her employer, Aleksander Didriksen Fresvoll (c. 1653–1735), of being involved in their daughter's death, and the court interrogated over 30 witnesses to shed light on the matter. It turned out that Dorte had gone missing on the same day as a wedding at the neighbouring farm, Moen. Dorte had spent the evening and night before the wedding dancing at Moen with other young people from the area, and one witness stated that "she seemed sensible, just like the other girls." This characterization was in response to a statement made by Kari Sakrisdatter (c. 1646–1731),

Aleksander Fresvoll's wife, perhaps in an effort to free her husband from suspicion, that Dorte had had "some strange ideas in her head." Another witness, Anne Mikkelsdatter Krakerud (c. 1641–1725), stated that she had not sensed "any foolishness" in Dorte's behaviour. On the contrary, Dorte "had been a God-fearing girl, who had liked to read in a book her father had given to her." The witness added that Dorte used to visit Hans Olsen Nitteberg (c. 1655–1707), a fiddler, former farmer, and later crofter at Krakerud; apparently she read in a book with him, and he "had shown her some numbers printed in the book."⁷⁵ In other words, like 10-year-old Ole Jensen mentioned above, Dorte had been given a book by her father to read at the place where she worked as a maid. She had been fond of reading and even consulted her neighbour, a common man, not a learned person, about what she was reading. Kari Fresvoll's impression that Dorte had "some strange ideas in her head," aside from simply a defence of her husband, might indicate that Dorte had expressed some ideas about her book, but like Johanne in the story above, she did not believe in allowing her servants to read. In the court case, however, Dorte's affection for reading was used to prove her sanity and thus rule out the possibility of suicide. Although the cause of Dorte's death was never determined, Aleksander Fresvoll was freed from suspicion and Dorte was granted an "honourable burial."⁷⁶

Although modest in number, these episodes from the court records indicate how widespread reading must have been in eighteenth-century rural Norway, and they disclose a variety of different reading practices among members of the community: communal and individual reading by both male and female readers, reading aloud or silently, reading in the afternoon or late evening, reading during holidays or leisure time, reading material provided by parents and discussed with neighbours. The ways in which reading came up in the court cases, meanwhile, demonstrate diverse perspectives on reading and beliefs about who should do it, and why, and where. As such, they provide valuable information about reading practices, which are notoriously difficult to study, particularly in an early modern rural environment.

Conclusion

In 1703, the court scribe characterized two brothers from the farm Svenneby—Gudmund Hovolsen (c. 1654–1728) and Ole Hovolsen (c. 1663–1734)—as “simple-minded people who cannot themselves read or write,” and in 1752, Svend Jonsen Knapper (c. 1705–1762), a minor farmer, when asked, confessed that “he cannot read letters.”⁷⁷ These are the only two examples of illiteracy in eighteenth-century Odalen that I have come across in the court records. Yet illiteracy was not the standard in this peripheral East Norwegian parish, with its “mountains, marshes, brooks and rivers.” And considering that Odalen appears to have been quite average compared to its neighbouring parishes, or even below average, in terms of resources, illiteracy was most likely not the standard in the region more widely.

Viewed broadly, early modern Europe demonstrates considerable regional variation in the development of reading practices. The evolution of reading was primarily dependent on literacy levels, religious preferences, and the degree of industrialization relative to traditional economy.⁷⁸ In the Nordic countries, reading instruction took place mainly in a Lutheran religious setting, and religious books dominated the book market. With a majority of the population having reached a basic level of literacy, this context gave rise to reading practices often characterized as religious reading.⁷⁹ In some respects, my exploration of how reading came into being and took place in an eighteenth-century East Norwegian parish supports the established research on early modern reading practices in Nordic countries. On the one hand, the rural environment from the seventeenth century on offered opportunities to acquire reading skills, and reading abilities seem to have been relatively evenly socially distributed. On the other hand, probate and auction records reveal that while the preponderance of books owned, sold, and bought were religious, some were not, suggesting that the rural population might have had more diverse interests than was previously believed.

There are relatively few studies of rural reading practices and book culture in eighteenth-century Norway. Moreover, Odalen is located in a marginally investigated part of Norway. With the aim of adding new knowledge to the existing literature, my strategy was thus to zoom in on this single parish and

conduct a detailed examination of a limited number of sources of various types, in search of empirical evidence concerning reading. Guided by actor-network theory's sensitivity to unexpected connections and insights, my exploration contributes to a more diverse understanding of reading among the rural population of Norway at the time. Auction records demonstrate an interest in books of genres and on topics which far exceed the religious domain. They also reveal an attraction among this segment of the population to the materiality of books, and suggest that people were using books for purposes other than reading. Court records, meanwhile, which have thus far been a neglected source among historians of books and reading, disclose still more attitudes and practices related to books and reading.⁸⁰ Although they are an extremely time-consuming source to study, court records therefore offer a promising avenue for tracing further insights about how and why reading was conducted, beyond the indirect evidence in sources on reading instruction and book production, distribution, and ownership.

Taken individually, none of the examined source types have the capacity to adequately answer the question of how reading took place. Sources on reading instruction describe the means by which reading skills were acquired; probate and auction records show which books were owned, sold, and bought; and court records reveal how actual readers approached and used reading matter. Taken together, however, and as I hope to have demonstrated in this study, these sources can give us a picture of the concrete and situated practices of instruction and interaction with books through which reading comes alive.

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Notes

¹ Etymologically, the name “Odalen” means the “the valley of the river” (referring to the river Glomma).

² Strøm-Odalen sokneprestembete, Kallsbok (1733–c. 1904), 1a–1b, 10b.

³ Strøm-Odalen sokneprestembete, Ministerialbok 1 (1689–1715), 240.

⁴ Kristin Asdal, “Contexts in Action – And the Future of the Past in STS,” *Science, Technology & Human Values* 37, no. 4 (2012): 397.

⁵ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 79–81.

⁶ Latour, *Reassembling*, 39.

⁷ See for example Jostein Fet, *Lesande bønder: litterær kultur i norske allmugesamfunn før 1840* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1995); Charlotte Appel, *Læsning og bogmarked i 1600-tallets Danmark* (København: Museum Tusulanum, 2001); Lis Byberg, “Brukte bøker til bymann og bonde: bokauksjonen i den norske litterære offentlighet 1750-1815” (PhD diss., University of Oslo, 2007).

⁸ Nils Glostrup, *Biskop Nils Glostrups Visitatser i Oslo og Hamar Stifter 1617–1637* (Christiania: Thronsen, 1895), 49–53.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 56, 66.

¹⁰ For an overview of discussions about what an early modern literacy might denote, see Appel and Fink-Jensen, “Books, Literacy, and Religious Reading,” 9–11.

¹¹ Denmark and Norway were ruled by the Danish crown—from 1660, through monarchical absolutism—throughout the early modern period (until 1814), and largely shared the same legislation.

¹² Charlotte Appel and Morten Fink-Jensen, *Dansk skolehistorie 1. Da læreren holdt skole. Tiden før 1780*, (Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2013), 37–47; Jon Haarberg and Marit Sjelmo, “Pontoppidans pinefulle *Sandhed* – mellom leseferdighet og utenatføring,” in *Litterære verdensborgere. Transnasjonale perspektiver på norsk bokhistorie 1519–1850*, eds. Aasta M.B. Bjørkøy, Ruth Hemstad, Aina Nøding and Anne Birgitte Rønning (Oslo: Nasjonalbiblioteket), 222–23.

¹³ Appel and Fink-Jensen, *Dansk skolehistorie 1*, 87–101; Haarberg and Sjelmo, “Pontoppidans pinefulle *Sandhed*,” 218.

¹⁴ Charlotte Appel and Morten Fink-Jensen, “Books, Literacy, and Religious Reading in the Lutheran North,” in *Religious Reading in the Lutheran North: Studies in Early Modern Scandinavian Book Culture*, eds. Charlotte Appel and Morten Fink-Jensen (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 7; Appel and Fink-Jensen, *Dansk skolehistorie 1*, 97; Haarberg and Sjelmo, “Pontoppidans pinefulle *Sandhed*,” 220.

¹⁵ Øvre Romerike sorenskriveri, Tingbok 21 (1681), 4a–4b.

¹⁶ Strøm-Odalen sokneprestembete, Ministerialbok 1 (1689–1715), 213.

¹⁷ Lensregnskaper, Akershus len, Fogderegnskap, Øvre Romerike og Solør, 1630–1631 (“Sagefald/Ougdallen”).

¹⁸ Appel and Fink-Jensen, *Dansk skolehistorie 1*, 15.

¹⁹ Øvre Romerike sorenskriveri, Tingbok 49 (1720–1723), 141b.

²⁰ Øvre Romerike sorenskriveri, Tingbok 32 (1694), 37a.

²¹ Øvre Romerike sorenskriveri, Tingbok 33 (1695), 1b.

²² Strøm-Odalen sokneprestembete, Kallsbok (1733–c. 1904), 10b.

²³ Øvre Romerike sorenskriveri, Skifteprotokoll 1 (1683–1703), 95a.

²⁴ Øvre Romerike sorenskriveri, Skifteprotokoll 2 (1704–1715), 295b.

²⁵ Strøm-Odalen sokneprestembete, Ministerialbok 2 (1716–1740), 1.

²⁶ Strøm-Odalen sokneprestembete, Ministerialbok 2 (1716–1740), 293.

²⁷ Norwegian and Danish are closely related North Germanic languages, but throughout the early modern period Danish was used as the common written language in Denmark-Norway.

²⁸ Quoted in Birger Kirkeby, *Odalsboka. Fellesbind for Nord- og Sør-Odal. Bygdehistorie inntil 1819* (Sør- og Nord-Odal kommuner, 1966), 278.

²⁹ Øvre Romerike sorenskriveri, Tingbok 22 (1682), 74a.

³⁰ Øvre Romerike sorenskriveri, Skifteprotokoll 2 (1704–1715), 41b.

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- ³¹ Øvre Romerike sorenskriveri, Skifteprotokoll 2 (1704–1715), 244b.
- ³² Øvre Romerike sorenskriveri, Skifteprotokoll 8a (1756–1758), 87b.
- ³³ Øvre Romerike prosti, Skifteprotokoll 1 (1709–1736), 262a.
- ³⁴ Aker sorenskriveri, Tingbok 20 (1684–1685), 84a; Egil Enemo, *Vilje til vekst. Skolen i Vang gjennom 250 år* (Hamar: Vang kommune, 1989), 15–16.
- ³⁵ Appel and Fink-Jensen, *Dansk skolehistorie 1*, 167.
- ³⁶ Strøm-Odalen sokneprestembete, Ministerialbok 1 (1689–1715), 216.
- ³⁷ Vinger sokneprestembete, Ministerialbok 1 (1689–1729), 65b.
- ³⁸ Kirkeby, *Odalsboka*, 278, 379.
- ³⁹ Øvre Romerike sorenskriveri, Tingbok 42 (1704), 24a.
- ⁴⁰ Appel and Fink-Jensen, *Dansk skolehistorie 1*, 165–167, 185–198.
- ⁴¹ Strøm-Odalen sokneprestembete, Skole- og fattigkasseregnskap 1748–1785, Fattigkasseregnskap 1785–1838, 4–42.
- ⁴² *Forordning, Om Skolerne paa Landet i Norge, Og hvad Klokkerne og Skoleholderne derfor maa nyde, 1739* (Oslo: Selskap for norsk skolehistorie, 1990), §§ 13 and 39.
- ⁴³ Knut Tveit, *Allmugeskolen på Austlandsbygdene 1730–1830* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1990), 50.
- ⁴⁴ Kirkeby, *Odalsboka*, 381–382.
- ⁴⁵ Haarberg and Sjelmo, “Pontoppidans pinefulle *Sandhed*,” 218.
- ⁴⁶ Strøm-Odalen sokneprestembete, Skole- og fattigkasseregnskap 1748–1785, Fattigkasseregnskap 1785–1838, 165–167.
- ⁴⁷ Jostein Fet, *Lesande bønder*.
- ⁴⁸ Øvre Romerike sorenskriveri, Skifteprotokoll 3 (1716–1729), 244a; Skifteprotokoll 6 (1744–1751), 344a; Skifteprotokoll 7 (1751–1756), 469a; Skifteprotokoll 8a (1756–1758), 86a; Skifteprotokoll 8b (1758–1763), 250b; Skifteprotokoll 9 (1763–1773), 8, 746; Solør og Odalen sorenskriveri, Skifteprotokoll 4 Odalen (1774–1791), 53b, 87a.

⁴⁹ Jon Haarberg, “Earways to Heaven: Singing the Catechism in Denmark-Norway, 1596–1756,” in *Religious Reading in the Lutheran North: Studies in Early Modern Scandinavian Book Culture*, eds. Charlotte Appel and Morten Fink-Jensen (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 48–69.

⁵⁰ Appel and Fink-Jensen, “Books, Literacy, and Religious Reading.”

⁵¹ Anne Eidsfeldt, “‘Til Trycken forferdiget oc bekostet’. Boktrykkere og bokhandlere som forleggere i Christiania 1677–1703,” in *Litterære verdensborgere. Transnasjonale perspektiver på norsk bokhistorie 1619–1850*, eds. Aasta M.B. Bjørkøy, Ruth Hemstad, Aina Nøding, and Anne Birgitte Rønning (Oslo: Nasjonalbiblioteket, 2019), 81–108; Henrik Horstbøll, *Menigmands medie. Det folkelige bogtryk i Danmark 1500–1840* (København: Det kongelige bibliotek/Museum tusculanum, 1999), 273–99.

⁵² Appel and Fink-Jensen, *Dansk skolehistorie 1*, 94.

⁵³ While Odalen’s parish register lists 112 burials of grown-up people from 1751 to 1756, the probate record for the same period registers 28 probate assemblies in Odalen, i.e., 25 percent.

⁵⁴ Roger Chartier, “Laborers and Voyagers: From the Text to the Reader,” *Diacritics* 22, no. 2 (1992): 57–58.

⁵⁵ Øvre Romerike sorenskriveri, Skifteprotokoll 6 (1744–1751), 343b.

⁵⁶ Øvre Romerike sorenskriveri, Skifteprotokoll 8a (1756–1758), 88b.

⁵⁷ Solør og Odalen sorenskriveri, Auksjonsprotokoll 2 (1787–1794), 36a–41a.

⁵⁸ Chartier, “Laborers and Voyagers,” 52.

⁵⁹ Solør og Odalen sorenskriveri, Auksjonsprotokoll 2 (1787–1794), 27b, 40b, 168b; Auksjonsprotokoll 4 (1799–1804), 58a, 347a.

⁶⁰ Solør og Odalen sorenskriveri, Auksjonsprotokoll 2 (1787–1794), 36b.

⁶¹ Kornerup, Bjørn. “Iver Brinck,” *Dansk biografisk leksikon* (2011, https://biografiskeksikon.lex.dk/Iver_Brinck).

⁶² Roger Chartier, *Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 89.

⁶³ Kristina Lundblad, *Bound to be Modern: Publishers’ Cloth Bindings and the Material Culture of the Book 1840–1914*, trans. Alan Crozier (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press), 219–33.

⁶⁴ Bruno Latour, “Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together,” *Knowledge and Society: Studies in the Sociology of Culture Past and Present* 6 (1986): 10.

⁶⁵ Øvre Romerike sorenskriveri, Skifteprotokoll 5 (1737–1740), 216a.

⁶⁶ Bruno Latour, *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 32–33.

⁶⁷ Latour, *Reassembling*, 79–81.

⁶⁸ Solør og Østerdalen sorenskriveri, Tingbok 60 (1737–1739), 167b–168a.

⁶⁹ Fet, *Lesande bønder*, 199–200.

⁷⁰ Trygve Rüiser Gundersen, “Memory and Meaning: The Haugean Revival (1796–1804) and Its Place in the History of Reading,” in *Religious Reading in the Lutheran North: Studies in Early Modern Scandinavian Book Culture*, eds. Charlotte Appel and Morten Fink-Jensen (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 159–90.

⁷¹ Øvre Romerike sorenskriveri, Skifteprotokoll 3 (1716–1729), 244a.

⁷² Solør og Østerdalen sorenskriveri, Skifteprotokoll 3 (1716–1725), 78a.

⁷³ Øvre Romerike sorenskriveri, Tingbok 54 (1743–1747), 419b.

⁷⁴ Hedemarken sorenskriveri, Tingbok 47a (1748–1750), 126a.

⁷⁵ Øvre Romerike sorenskriveri, Tingbok 44 (1707), 79a–79b.

⁷⁶ Strøm-Odalen sokneprestembete, Ministerialbok 1 (1689–1715), 403.

⁷⁷ Øvre Romerike sorenskriveri, Tingbok 41 (1703), 6a; Tingbok 56 (1751–1754), 104a.

⁷⁸ Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, “Introduction,” *A History of Reading in the West*, eds. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (Oxford: Polity Press, 1999), 20–29.

⁷⁹ Appel and Fink-Jensen, “Books, Literacy, and Religious Reading,” 1.

⁸⁰ Norwegian court records have been successfully used in other projects, e.g., “Tingbokprosjektet” (<https://www.hf.uio.no/iakh/tjenester/kunnskap/samlinger/tingbok/>). At best, court records have the potential to reveal information similar to that found in Catholic inquisition records: see Marie-Elizabeth Ducreux, “Reading unto Death: Books and Readers in Eighteenth-Century Bohemia,” in *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Roger Chartier (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), 191–229.

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