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"The Gothick Hero" in Context: Poetry and Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England

Wiersz „The Gothic Hero" w kontekście polityki angielskiej XVIII wieku

Keywords: Sweden, Joseph Browne, Charles XII, Eighteenth century, English poetry
Słowa kluczowe: Joseph Browne, Karol XII, wiek osiemnasty, poezja angielska

Abstract

Sweden and its prominent monarchs captured the attention of English political and literary circles as early as the seventeenth-century conflict between King and Parliament. However, this interest notably intensified at the dawn of the eighteenth century. This increased focus can be attributed to the political climate in Europe, marked by division and involvement in two significant conflicts: the War of the Spanish Succession and the Great Northern War. The poem "The Gothick Hero, a Poem, Sacred to the Memory of Charles XII" represents a literary engagement with England's ambivalent stance towards the Swedish king during this tumultuous period. This article examines two versions of the poem, published in 1708 and 1715, respectively. A comparative analysis reveals the work's transformation over this short period, reflecting contemporary political developments. The conclusion addresses questions of authorship and argues for a re-evaluation of prevailing interpretations, which have traditionally regarded the poem as a celebration of the Hanoverian dynasty. This reassessment seeks to broaden the understanding of the poem's political and cultural significance in its historical context.

Introduction

Sweden, along with its prominent monarchs, had garnered the attention of the English as early as the seventeenth century, particularly during the period of the

English Civil War. However, this interest intensified considerably at the beginning of the eighteenth century. One of the primary factors contributing to this growing engagement was the evolving political landscape in both nations, which was shaped by issues of royal succession, the conflict between George I and Sweden's Charles XII, the Jacobite uprisings, and the Great Northern War. These developments were widely discussed in the context of Anglo-Swedish relations by English writers and pamphleteers, with particular emphasis placed on Charles XII as a pivotal figure in early eighteenth-century European politics.

The Swedish king not only became a prominent subject of poetic works but also featured extensively in English newspaper reports concerning the political situation in Sweden. This heightened interest was not coincidental, especially when considered in relation to England's domestic political climate at the time and the ideological affiliations of those producing Sweden-related essays, pamphlets, and literary works. One such example is the poem "The Gothick Hero, a Poem, Sacred to the Memory of Charles XII, King of Sweden, Restorer of the Protestant Religion in Silesia". The poem represents a literary engagement to England's ambivalent stance towards the Swedish king during this tumultuous period. This article examines two versions of the poem, published in 1708 and 1715, respectively. A comparative analysis reveals the work's transformation within the relatively short span of time, reflecting contemporary political developments. The conclusion addresses questions of authorship and argues for a re-evaluation of prevailing interpretations, which have traditionally regarded the poem as a celebration of the Hanoverian dynasty. This reassessment seeks to broaden the understanding of the poem's political and cultural significance in its historical context.

England and Sweden at the Turn of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

The relationship between Sweden and England, which developed on rather friendly terms since the Thirty Years' War, experienced notable shifts by the late seventeenth century. A change in Swedish foreign policy, initiated by the minister Bengt Oxenstierna, marked a departure from Sweden's traditional alliance with France. This shift resulted in Charles XI aligning Sweden with Holland and Austria in the early 1680s and subsequently joining the League of Augsburg in 1686. Attempts to establish closer ties with England during the reigns of Charles II and James II yielded little in the way of practical outcomes. However, the Glorious

Revolution of 1688, which placed William III on the English throne and integrated England into Dutch foreign policy, fostered the conditions for closer cooperation between the two nations. These developments marked a significant turning point in Anglo-Swedish relations during this period. The governments of both Holland and England, unified by their shared anti-French policies, imposed restrictions on Baltic trade with France. This decision had particularly severe consequences for Sweden, as exports to France comprised a significant portion of Swedish trade. Despite Swedish protests against the interception and seizure of their ships, there was minimal international response to these actions (Chance 1901: 685). The outbreak of the Great Northern War further highlighted the complexities of the political landscape in the Baltic region. The conflict saw Sweden pitted against a coalition comprising Denmark, Saxony, Poland under Augustus II, and Russia. Despite facing a united front, Charles XII successfully resisted these combined forces. Meanwhile, the political tensions in Europe escalated as the death of Charles II of Spain triggered widespread concern, signalling the onset of a broader continental struggle. Louis XIV accepted the testament designating his younger grandson as the heir to the Spanish throne, setting the stage for the inevitable conflict that would become the War of the Spanish Succession. In anticipation of this, the western powers turned to Sweden, hoping to leverage treaties signed in 1698[1]. However, Charles XII, already embroiled in the Great Northern War, refused to align with either side. Despite diplomatic efforts and pressure from his own ministers to negotiate peace and conclude the northern conflict, Charles remained resolute in pursuing his vendetta against Augustus, the Elector of Saxony. Although centred in northern Europe, the conflict had potential ramifications for the conduct of the War of the Spanish Succession, illustrating the interconnected nature of European power struggles in this period. During its triumphant military campaign, Sweden invaded Saxony in 1706, and by the following year, tensions between Sweden and the Holy Roman Empire threatened to escalate into war. Stationed at Altranstädt in Saxony, Charles XII was approached by numerous diplomats seeking to influence his next moves. French envoys, in particular, urged Sweden to attack the Empire, as such an action would compel the Emperor to redeploy troops from the French-Austrian frontier, thereby alleviating France's military pressures. For Charles XII, the potential justification for action against the Emperor lay in defending the rights of Protestants in Silesia, which had been

[1] The Year 1698 is called in Swedish history the year of alliances since this year the treaties between Sweden and States General, Hanover, Brandenburg, France, Austria, England and Denmark were signed.

guaranteed by the Peace of Westphalia but subsequently violated by the Holy Roman Empire. Positioning himself as a defender of Protestantism would align him with the legacy of his predecessor, Gustavus Adolphus, famously called the "Lion of the North" for his role as the protector of Protestantism in Germany during the Thirty Years' War. The English government, aware of the potential repercussions of Charles XII's continued advance westward, sought to exert diplomatic pressure to influence his plans. In line with this strategy, John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, personally met with the Swedish king in Altranstädt in April 1707 (Stamp 1898: 111–115). This political tension quickly found resonance in the English press and literary circles.

Charles XII and Sweden in early modern English Press and Literature

Sweden and its prominent monarchs had long drawn the interest of English writers, dating back to the seventeenth-century Civil War. However, this fascination intensified with Charles XII emerging as a central figure of politics in early eighteenth-century Europe. English opinions about Charles XII were polarized, ranging from overt hostility to unreserved admiration. The decisive division among English politicians following the rise of Charles XII also manifested in literary propaganda, expressed in Tory support for Sweden and its Whig's criticism. The Swedish embassy in London faced mounting challenges from Whig pamphleteers, whose writings were highly critical of the Swedish monarch. Despite counter-efforts to promote a more favourable narrative, the negative discourse surrounding Charles XII continued to escalate (Schuchard 2011: 38).

Tensions reached a peak when the Swedish ambassador, Leijoncrona, formally intervened in response to Daniel Defoe's critical remarks about Charles XII in his *Review* (Novak 2001: 329–330; Furbank & Owens 1986: 338–339). Defoe referred to Charles XII in the context of his uncertain war plans, noting the significant impact his potential decision to attack the Holy Roman Empire could have on the War of the Spanish Succession. Whig politicians sought to redirect Charles' focus toward Russia, viewing such a move as more beneficial to their broader geopolitical strategy. Robert Harley, reflecting these concerns, wrote to the Duke of Marlborough in 1706: "I heartily wish that any method may be found to get the Swedes out of Saxony, for should they take up winter quarters there, there is reason to believe France will prevail themselves of that occasion before spring" (qtd. in Hattendorf 1979: 182). In the 2 September 1707 issue (345–346),

Defoe employed irony to critique the Swedish monarch's heroism, intertwining political commentary with satirical overtones to question the motivations and implications of Charles' military ambitions:

> …the King of S……., the great Gothic Hero that was to pull down the Emperor and the Pope, and a World of strange things, is like to be satisfied with the Compliances of the Emperor, and we are to have no War commenc'd there…. And now his S….Majesty, may, perhaps, find time, to rescue Poland out of the hands the Muscovites if he can --- I ought to say, or rather, which I should think to be as commendable too, and as like a Hero, he may go and recover Livonia, and deliver his own poor Subjects, abandon'd there to the Tyranny of the Czar, while their natural King and Protector was so busie, pushing his Glory in Poland against King Augustus, that he could not, or did not … this fit to find a while, or find Forces to defend them.

The passage unequivocally supported the Whig strategy of redirecting Charles XII's attention toward Russia, thereby encouraging him to abandon any plans to attack the Emperor. Defoe took this stance further, launching a direct critique of the Swedish monarch: "If this to be a Hero – If this be to make a King Great and Terrible in the World, God Almighty grant, England, may never be Govern'd by Heroes…" (346). Such pointed criticism of Charles XII elicited a formal response from the Swedish ambassador, Leijoncrona, reflecting the heightened political sensitivity surrounding the portrayal of the Swedish king in the English press.

"The Gothic Hero" of 1708

In 1708, an anonymous poem titled "The Gothick Hero. A Poem, Sacred to the Immortal Honour of Charles XII. King of Sweden. The Glorious Restorer of the Protestant Religion in Silesia, from Popish Usurpation, and Arbitrary Power" was published. This work extols the Swedish monarch, portraying him as a "Northern Star" who descends from "old Gothick Blood" and whose recent exploits surpass those of both mythical and historical heroes: "What were those to Wonders done of late/By Charles the Wise, the Vertuous, and the Great?". Likely composed in late 1707, the poem celebrates Charles XII as a "Victorious Goth [who] devoutly fights/To rescue Nations, and Restore their Rights," situating his achievements within the specific context of liberating the oppressed Poles from "base usurping Tyranny" and the Silesians from "false Popery." Paradoxically, Charles XII is compared to the Duke of Marlborough, a figure whose association with the Williamite-Whig circle seemingly contrasts with the poem's intent to support Sweden against the Empire:

[…] These were great Feats of Arms in elder Days,
E'er Alexander, Scipio, Ceasar was […]
What were th'Olympic Games, but boyish Plays,
To gain the people's Voice, (an empty Praise!)
To wear the laurel, Ivy, or the Bays?
What was all this, but Pageantry and Show,
Trifles, to what brave Charles and Churchill do?

Further complicating this apparent contradiction, William III and Henry de Nassau are also mentioned in the text, both prominent figures linked to Whig ideals:

Great was young Ammon at the Grannick Flood,
When singly he whole Legions there withstood,
Where did his Courage and his Conduct shine,
As Nassau's after at the bloody Boyne:
Yet these two Heroes were not free,
In Court or Camp, from treach'rous Villany.
For His Ambition Alexander dearly pay'd,
And William's Council always were betray'd;
But Charles, beyond all former Heroes Great,
In ev'ry Enterprize is fortunate.

This alignment appears at odds with the poem's narrative and seemingly contradicts its intent to support Sweden against the Empire. "The Gothick Hero" was likely composed and published before the 1708 government crisis, a turning point when the Duke of Marlborough's unequivocal commitment to Whig principles—superseding earlier calls for moderation—became evident (Gregg 2001: 257). This may account for the paradoxical combination of praise directed toward Whig politicians and the overarching anti-Whig intention of the poem.

The concluding section of the poem praises Charles XII as "Dear to the Swede, to Britain, France, and Spain" the last two being the countries acting against the Empire. What united these nations, was their shared involvement in efforts to restore the Stuart dynasty to the British throne, which further proved the poem's anti-Whig orientation. Evidently, Charles XII was depicted as a supporter of the Stuarts and a pro-French figure, positioning him in opposition to the Empire. Another noteworthy element to consider is the recurrent epithet attributed to Charles, "The Lion of the North". This designation appears to extend beyond a coincidental or superficial association with Gustavus Adolphus. The substantial sections of the poem dedicated to the narrative of the earlier monarch suggest a deliberate parallel to the political landscape of Europe during the Thirty Years'

War and Sweden's involvement in the conflict. The alliance between Sweden and France against the Empire during that period seems to serve as a model for an analogous geopolitical alignment in early eighteenth-century politics.

The selection of Charles XII's deeds to be celebrated – among many other possibilities – and the epithet assigned to the Swedish monarch in the poem's title are far from coincidental. In this context, the poem can, and perhaps should, be interpreted as a direct response to the accusations levelled by Defoe, which provides insight into its potential authorship. Although the poem has been attributed to Joseph Browne, this attribution, like many others for anonymous eighteenth-century works, lacks substantial supporting evidence (Furbank & Owens, Downie 2004; Allen 1947). There is a well-founded basis for attributing the poem to Joseph Browne, primarily due to the documented exchange between Browne and Defoe in their publications (Kozak 2019: 37–38) dating back to 1705. Within the context of this prolonged conflict, the poem, published in 1708 and likely composed in late 1707 following the early September issue of *Review*, appears to be another of Browne's rebuttals to Defoe, specifically addressing his critique of Charles XII.

Another crucial element in interpreting the poem's intent lies in its dedication to Christoffer Leijoncrona, the Swedish ambassador who served in this role until his death in 1710. Leijoncrona was instrumental in fostering commercial ties between Sweden and England during the latter half of the seventeenth century, within the broader framework of maintaining amicable relations between both nations and France. However, following the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the resulting shift in England's political landscape, Anglo-Swedish relations entered a new phase under the influence of Bengt Oxenstierna, Sweden's anti-French chancellor. The shift in Swedish politics, marked by an effort to dismantle the traditional alliance with France, aligned with the stance of William III, the anti-French Dutch ruler, and his Whig supporters. This political reorientation led the English government to increasingly favour Russia, which supplanted Sweden as its primary trade partner in the Baltic region during the early eighteenth century (Åström 1962: 5). Within Sweden, this divide was mirrored by the opposing factions of *Caps* and *Hats*. The *Caps*, represented by figures like Bengt Oxenstierna, advocated for an anti-French, pro-Russian approach and supported England's dynastic shift. In contrast, Christoffer Leijoncrona aligned with the *Hats*, promoting pro-French, anti-Russian policies and actively supporting the Jacobite cause to restore James (Stuart) III to the throne. Leijoncrona actively opposed Defoe's harsh critique of Charles XII, a stance reflected in the poem's dedication to the ambassador. This connection underscores the work's alignment with Jacobite

interests, as Leijoncrona was deeply involved in bolstering the Swedish monarch's position within an alliance with France and Jacobite England. His anti-Russian clandestine negotiations with English ministers, exposed by Peter the Great's envoy to England (Dixon 1998: 165–66), highlight the intricate and transnational nature of political alliances, wherein figures from ostensibly opposing factions collaborated to advance mutual objectives.

The temporary political deadlock was resolved following the Duke of Marlborough's meeting with Charles XII in Altranstädt in April 1707. Marlborough, through strategic bribery – including Swedish Chancellor Carl Piper, Charles's most trusted advisor (Stamp 1898: 115–116) – successfully influenced Sweden to undertake an invasion of Russia. Peace negotiations with the Emperor were concluded in April, culminating in the treaty signed on August 31, 1707, after which Charles directed his forces eastward. The treaty between Sweden and Saxony enabled Saxon troops to support the Allies, and Charles's campaign against Russia effectively eliminated the possibility of Sweden aligning with France during the War of the Spanish Succession.

Great Britain and Sweden 1709–1715

Schuchard highlights the contrasting perspectives on Sweden held by the Tories and Whigs, shaped partly by Queen Anne's empathy for Sweden's plight during Charles XII's captivity in Turkey and the Whigs' ambitions to exploit Sweden's weakened state to expand British territorial and commercial interests. Additional factors deepened this divide, notably the political controversies surrounding the Lutheran Church in 1710. Following Lejioncrona's death in April of that year, Carl Gyllenborg assumed the role of chief ambassador and faced challenges related to preserving Swedish religious independence amidst growing Hanoverian-Whig influence over ecclesiastical matters (Schuchard 2011: 38). A significant factor that could have facilitated closer ties between the Swedish Lutheran churches and the High Anglican Church was their liturgical similarity, which both Carl Gyllenborg and Bishop Swedberg sought to unify. Despite religious differences, Jacobite sympathies were notably present within the Swedish Congregation in London. The ongoing disputes, along with Whig accusations, increasingly framed the Swedish monarch as a supporter of "bringing in the Popish Pretender" (Defoe 1717: 65). These allegations, which extended to Swedish clergy and their supposed endorsement of re-establishing absolute monarchy in England, were reflected in polemics such as those between Sir Jacob Bancks,

a Swedish-born MP, and the Whig writer William Benson (Wright 1940: 105). To the great bewilderment of Gyllenborg and the Swedish embassy, it emerged that the attacks on the Swedish monarch were instigated by John Robinson, the English representative at the Swedish court in Stockholm and a trusted advisor to both Charles XI and Charles XII. Robinson, who had resided in Sweden for nearly four decades, maintained close relationships with numerous figures in Sweden's political and ecclesiastical circles. Notably, he facilitated the meeting between Marlborough and Charles XII in Altranstädt. The Whigs' increasing animosity towards Sweden was partly driven by their suspicions regarding the Swedish embassy's connections with the Jacobites – suspicions that were not entirely groundless. These connections are evidenced by the activities of both Carl Gyllenborg and Emanuel Swedenborg, who acted as intermediaries between their acquaintances in England and prominent intellectual figures in Sweden (Schuchard 2011: 40). Among their correspondents and admirers of Charles XII was Charles Leslie, a staunch advocate for the Stuart restoration. In 1710, Leslie published "The Good Old Cause", a pamphlet defending the High Church and the Stuart succession, which led to an immediate warrant for his arrest. Despite living in disguise, Leslie maintained communication with Gyllenborg, and together they explored the possibility of securing Swedish support for James III. Upon his arrival in France in 1711, Charles Leslie presented James III with plans for securing Swedish assistance, arguing that Charles XII "might once more have the balance of Europe in his hands, and give a general peace upon reasonable terms" (Macpherson 1775: 210–218). The consolidation of a Swedish –Jacobite alliance gained momentum in April 1712 when, during the negotiations at Utrecht, France formally approved the Hanoverian succession to the British throne.

Browne's commendation of Charles XII highlighted the Swedish king's contributions to the re-establishment of the Protestant religion, portraying him as „pious Charles […] whom Religion in Distress adores". The question of Browne's motivations for supporting Catholic Jacobites, despite his staunch advocacy for the High Church, warrants closer examination. The answer may be found in Leslie's 1711 memorial to James III, where he outlined the strategic advantages of such a position: an alliance with a Protestant king like Charles XII could help undermine the Whigs' narrative of a Catholic threat. This tactic aligned with broader efforts to challenge Whig dominance and bolster Jacobite legitimacy.

The Whigs' numerous pamphlets attacking Sweden eventually elicited a response from Charles XII. Both the Swedish monarch and Gyllenborg repeatedly sought the suppression of Benson's letters (Schuchard 2011: 51), which linked Tories, Jacobites, and Swedish supporters to advocacy for tyranny and slavery.

The English government's failure to act against these inflammatory publications only strengthened the alliance between Swedish ambassadors and Jacobite interests. This cooperation further solidified the Jacobites' portrayal of their king as the rightful sovereign and a divinely appointed ruler.

The employment of Sweden in allegorical narratives within the Tory publication *The Examiner* offers a valuable perspective on the Tories' favourable disposition towards Charles XII. Delarivier Manley skillfully utilized this allegorical framework to depict Queen Anne's subjugation to Whig interests, particularly in issue no. 7 from 1711. Ruth Herman, in her analysis of Manley's work, elucidates the symbolic significance of specific elements within the allegory associated with Sweden:

> The central theme of the allegory is the thraldom of the king of Sweden (and thereby queen of England) at the hands of the Turks. It also offers a defence of the king for appearing to have distanced himself from his loyal Swedish subject (the Tories), remaining with the Turks (the Junto) for an inexplicably long time, particularly since it is made clear that the Turks' religious practices have made him uneasy. The suggestion is that it is merely "hard Circumstances" which had "thrown" him into such company. In truth, The King was "heartily weary of His *new Friends* and *Allies* [intending] to set Himself free, as soon as He can". Equally, it enforces Manley's oft-repeated point that despite the monarch's proximity to these "new *Friends and Allies*" (Junto) and contrary to the appearances of "State and Grandeur", he is "no better than a Prisoner" (…)The king's "Dispatches must be Counter-sign'd by *Turks*; and He is not allow'd to have any Money, but what the *Turks* furnish him with" (131).

There is no actual comparison between Marlborough and Charles XII, and Sweden is certainly not associated with the Whigs.

"The Gothic Hero" of 1715

In the autumn of 1714, Charles XII returned from his Turkish exile, marking a political landscape reminiscent of the conditions in 1706. Shortly thereafter, in 1715, "The Gothick Hero" resurfaced, published in "State Tracts", a two-volume collection attributed on its title page to the "Author of The Examiner." This revised version of the poem, while largely faithful to the original, is notably shorter and exhibits alterations that invite reinterpretation within a new political framework. Significant omissions, including the dedication (likely excluded due to Lejioncrona's death a few years prior), and the removal of references to "Popish Usurpation" and "Arbitrary Power," suggest a measured shift in tone, particularly

regarding anti-Catholic sentiment. These modifications may reflect evolving political sensitivities or a recalibration of the poem's message to suit the changed context of its republication.

A notable distinction between the two versions of "The Gothick Hero" lies in their pre- and post-Poltava contexts. In the 1715 version, references to Charles XII as "invincible" were conspicuously omitted, reflecting the king's diminished stature following his defeat at Poltava and subsequent exile in Turkey. The revised text, adapted to the altered political landscape, excludes earlier assertions of Charles' unchecked power, such as: "Kings at his Will and Pleasures have uncrown'd,/ And all their pompous Titles have disown'd". Similarly, proclamations celebrating Charles' victories, which might have seemed ironic or even derisive post-Poltava, were removed. For instance, the line "The mightiest Captains of his Age look on,/And can but wonder at what he has done" is absent in the updated version, signalling a deliberate effort to align the poem with the realities of the time.

Moreover, the 1715 version of the poem notably omits references to William III and Henry de Nassau, as well as the name of the Duke of Marlborough, who was previously compared to the Swedish monarch. The inclusion of such figures in the 1708 version, briefly discussed earlier in this article, played a significant role in positioning the poem and its author as supporters of the Hanoverian succession – a cause ardently championed by Churchill. Howard Weinbrot, in his study on Samuel Johnson, contextualizes the 1708 version of the poem within the broader effort to associate the Hanoverian dynasty with the descendants of the valiant ancient Goths. This connection situates the poem among works that endorsed the new English king, George I, reinforcing its initial alignment with Hanoverian interests. According to Weinbrot, "this sternly congenial Gothicism thus was easily absorbed into the heroic, glorious, and Protestant as enemies of the usurping, Popish, and arbitrary" (2005: 349).

Howard Weinbrot, in his analysis, highlights examples from Tory periodicals to argue that Charles XII was not regarded as a hero by either the Tories or the Jacobites at the time (345). He asserts that Charles was compared to Marlborough, an „unlikely Tory or Jacobite hero". However, in 1707 and 1708, Churchill was portrayed as a seemingly impartial general, focused on military endeavours rather than political machinations, securing victories for England. This perception began to shift during the political crisis of 1708, when his allegiance to the Whigs became evident. The staunch criticism directed at Marlborough in the Tory periodical *The Examiner*, which sought to expose his alleged desire to perpetuate various wars for personal glorification with the support of Treasurer Godolphin,

likely explains the removal of his name from the 1715 reprinted version of the poem. Howard Weinbrot, in his discussions of "The Gothick Hero" (1997, 2005), does not address the revised 1715 edition in which Churchill's name is omitted. Instead, he focuses solely on the 1708 version, interpreting it as aligning with the House of Hanover and disregarding the potential implications of the later alterations.

Conclusions

Initially, the strong endorsement of King Charles XII as a reviver of the Protestant faith and critic of the Catholic Church might superficially suggest admiration for a Protestant monarch associated with the Hanoverian lineage. However, this article has explored arguments supporting an alternative interpretation: that "The Gothick Hero" aligned itself with Charles XII as an opponent of the newly established Hanoverian monarchy. This interpretation starkly contrasts with more conventional readings of the poem. The alterations made to the text for its 1715 reprint, particularly the removal of specific content, underscore the author's nuanced approach to expressing political views. These changes reveal an indirect but deliberate engagement with the shifting political landscape, challenging traditional assumptions about the poem's allegiance.

Browne's political engagement appears to play a significant role in the anti-Hanoverian interpretation of "The Gothick Hero". His connections to the High Tories, coupled with his eventual hostility towards Robert Harley, provide evidence suggesting his anti-Hanoverian sympathies. Furthermore, the intelligence apparatus established after the Whigs assumed power in 1714 – and subsequently expanded to thwart potential Jacobite plots (Fritz 1973: 265–89) – may have necessitated the anonymous publication of "The Gothick Hero".

A key focus of the present analysis is the ideological conflict between Browne and Defoe, which forms a compelling – if not definitive – argument for attributing the authorship of the poem to Browne. The years-long mutual antagonism between the two writers, coupled with the temporal overlap of their publications expressing opposing views on Charles XII, suggests more than mere coincidence. In this context, the poem can be interpreted as a direct response to Defoe's criticisms of the Swedish monarch in *Review*. Amid the rising tide of anti-Swedish Whig propaganda, "The Gothick Hero", which extols Charles XII and is dedicated to a pro-French and anti-Russian ambassador, provides a compelling argument for interpreting its intent. The poem's praise for Charles's actions in Silesia directly aligns with support for a potential Swedish offensive

against the Empire – a strategy that, if successful, could have diverted Imperial forces from the western front and potentially led to a withdrawal from the war with France.

The reappearance of the poem in 1715 occurs within a markedly different political and ideological context. By 1711, with Leslie's "Memorial", the Jacobite-Swedish Plot had been launched, marking the consolidation of what had previously been only a loose cooperation among Tory, Jacobite, and Swedish interests. Revisions made to the 1708 version of the poem highlight a diminished anti-Catholic emphasis, a clearer understanding of Churchill's intentions, and a perspective shaped by the aftermath of the Battle of Poltava. Additionally, the poem's newly emphasized support for Sweden underscores its role in opposing the accession of the Hanoverian successor, George I, who was an overt adversary of Charles XII. These considerations, supported by both evidence and well-founded conjecture, challenge the prevailing interpretation of the poem as a work extolling the Hanoverian dynasty.

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