Making sense of romantic jealousy in late 18\textsuperscript{th}-century Sweden – the experiences of Pehr Stenberg

Ina Lindblom

Department of Historical, Philosophical and Religious studies, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden

ABSTRACT

Focusing on the life description of clergyman Pehr Stenberg, this article examines the internal processing of romantic jealousy in a late 18\textsuperscript{th}-century Swedish context. During his lifetime, Stenberg wrote a vast life description with the intent of documenting his innermost thoughts and feelings. In this account, the romantic jealousy that plagued Stenberg during his second marriage is described in intimate detail. Using this extensive and complex account to conduct a micro-historical exploration of romantic jealousy, this article displays jealousy as an entangled emotion by examining its relationship to key contemporary beliefs, thoughts and ideals, as well as to other emotions. Consequently, jealousy in relation to love and marriage, honour, psychological and physical pathology and religion is examined. Although comprising a single account, the life description of Pehr Stenberg manages to display the multidimensional nature of romantic jealousy and the very historically specific ways in which we explain and process our emotional experiences.

On a January morning in 1797, newly married priest Pehr Stenberg returned home to his parsonage in the northern Swedish town of Umeå after being away overnight on an errand. When reaching his home, he found both the gate to the courtyard and the window shutters of the house closed. He pounded on the shutters and the gate, but was left waiting in the street for what felt like a long while until the maid eventually let him in. After heatedly asking his wife why the house had been shut up in this way, Stenberg started searching the premises for signs of his wife’s infidelity:

[... ] I immediately walked between the chamber and the parlour, from there out into the courtyard and into the outhouses to look closely for any sign of what I feared had happened, while I attentively looked out through the windows to see whether anyone had snuck out through the gate after my arrival; but I did not find or see the least thing that could justify my suspicion.\textsuperscript{1}
Although finding no proof of his wife’s infidelity and in hindsight realizing that the maid had simply forgotten to open the shutters during the dark winter morning, Stenberg defines this incident as the start of a period of romantic jealousy that would plague him for years to come. Stenberg, who had married his second wife just months before, starts suspecting that she is bringing lovers into their home when he is out attending to his priestly duties. He starts interrogating her about her past and rifles through her possessions when she is not looking. The smallest detail sends him into a painful state of anxiety – when her skirt is wrinkled, he believes she has slept with someone, when a male neighbour asks to borrow a pair of scissors, he suspects he is having an affair with her.² Although Stenberg hopes that fatherhood will settle his jealousy, it is instead exacerbated after his daughter is born, as he does not believe the child to be his. Stenberg starts to look for signs of likeness between his daughter and male members of the local community who might have had a closer acquaintance with his wife. While performing a wedding ceremony, he notices a similarity between the chin of one of the wedding guests and that of his daughter. Stenberg confides his suspicions to his wife and describes how she later silently broached the topic while sitting by her infant child’s cradle:

She sat completely quiet and, as if immersed in deep thought, looked at her child attentively, pointed at the child’s chin and looked tenderly at me. She then pointed at the little dimple in my chin, whereupon tears stood in her eyes – and all of this without saying a word, barely letting a sigh escape her.³

The situation ultimately becomes so dire that both he and his wife later admit to praying that their child would die – he, in order not to be reminded of her infidelity; she, in order for the child to escape the plight of not being acknowledged, and potentially hated, by its father.⁴

Although Stenberg’s jealousy profoundly affected his family life, it did not lead to any altercation with the law or contact with medical institutions. Consequently, it might have left no trace for posterity were it not for the fact that, since his twenties, Stenberg had been writing a revealing portrayal of his life with the intent of documenting his most private thoughts and feelings. In this description, page after page is devoted to depicting the suspicions that would eventually take over his life. Thus, Stenberg’s text provides a uniquely detailed account of the internal processing of romantic jealousy, allowing for a micro-historical exploration of this emotion. Furthermore, the depth and scope of Stenberg’s account allow links to be drawn between the personal experience of an emotion, and the wider structural factors that affect and generate emotional experience. Stenberg’s struggle with romantic jealousy plays out at the end of the 18th century – a time when perceptions of love and marriage had started to transform.⁵ By making use of Stenberg’s extensive and complex account of his experiences, the aim of this article is to examine Stenberg’s experience of jealousy in relation to key contemporary social and cultural contexts. By examining its relationship to contemporary beliefs, thoughts and ideals, as well as to other emotions, jealousy is displayed as an ‘entangled emotion’. This approach, as well as other perspectives from the history of emotion, will be presented below.
The life description of Pehr Stenberg

Pehr Stenberg (1758–1824) was born to a poor farmer just outside Umeå, a small town on the north-eastern coast of Sweden with approximately 1,000 inhabitants. He showed intellectual promise as a child and was eventually given the opportunity to beg around the parish of Umeå to be able to pay for his tuition and study to become a priest at Åbo Academy in present-day Finland. During his studies, Stenberg worked as both a tutor and a so-called house chaplain in aristocratic families in the Finnish countryside. Stenberg would eventually return to his hometown and, in time, be promoted to the position of assistant vicar of the country parish of Umeå. During the period covered in this article, he is working as a curate in the town parish of Umeå. Although this type of social elevation from farmer’s son to priest was not wholly unusual in Swedish society at the time, Stenberg experienced an unusually wide realm of social environments. His occupation as a priest also meant that he gained a position of authority in his small community of origin. However, his humble background contributed to a strong sense of social insecurity.

As a student, Stenberg started writing a life description. He would continue this project until the year of his death, resulting in a manuscript totalling around 5,000 pages. This has been published in recent years. In part, the ambition to write this work came about after Stenberg attended a lecture in Åbo by theologian Henrik Gabriel Porthan. Porthan spoke of the new science of psychology and claimed that this had been unable to develop as so few people had bothered to document their observations of the characteristics of their soul. This prompted Stenberg to write a revealing account of his inner life. Using letters and notes as the basis of a cohesive portrayal, Stenberg’s description is unusually detailed and difficult to define according to genre, mixing practical details of everyday life with philosophical musings about the mysteries of the soul. Stenberg mainly intended the work for his descendants, who are also addressed directly throughout the text. However, he also considered posthumous publication of parts of the manuscript a possibility. As personal notes were used to write a coherent narrative several years after the events had occurred, Stenberg’s work combines the immediacy of a diary with the retrospective reflection of a memoir. Thus, the account of his jealousy is layered, with Stenberg minutely recounting his suspicions and in hindsight commenting on their absurd nature. Although it is unlikely that it formed an actual inspiration, Stenberg’s intimately revealing work bears similarities to the Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau – a work ‘famous for its singular project of self-revelation’.

Although Stenberg’s description is unusual in its scope, its existence speaks to a larger shift in 18th-century culture in which the inner workings of the self and questions of self-identity were given stronger emphasis. This included a heightened interest in the lives of individuals not belonging to the more distinguished ranks of society. Michael McKeon has described a change in autobiographical writing during the 18th century in which the ‘illustrious was challenged by the private or common example’. Rather than focusing on the exemplary lives of illustrious individuals, attention was increasingly directed at the ordinary man.

As previously mentioned, jealousy plays a central part in Stenberg’s portrayal of his adult life. For Stenberg, jealousy is not a transient emotion. It is not a sudden burst of feeling that quickly dissolves, but rather a painful, obsessive state that profoundly affected his life. Thus, Stenberg’s account is an attempt to make sense of this experience, both to
himself and to future readers. As such, it is Stenberg’s attempt to situate his experience of jealousy – to explain its causes, its manifestations and its consequences for both himself and his family. These attempts contain several different strains of thought on which he draws, or beliefs to which he relates. These elements are in no way unique to him but are part of a wider social and cultural fabric. Consequently, Stenberg’s account can be defined as part of the ‘exceptional normal’, meaning ‘extra-ordinary documents’ which, through micro-analytical reading, can ‘illuminate broad trends’.

**Early modern dimensions of romantic jealousy**

Existing research on the history of romantic jealousy shows that although predominantly viewed as negative, its salience and valuation have varied over time. In terms of gender, it has variously been thought of as primarily a female or a male trait. Jealousy is also often associated with conceptions of honour. By Renaissance and early modern thinkers, jealousy was generally negatively portrayed, for example likened to madness or poison. Werner Gundersheimer states that jealousy was often considered together with other emotions such as love, fear and shame, ‘all of which in turn are closely tied to contemporary concerns about honor’. Thus, jealousy was one among other so-called affects – powerful emotions that could cloud reason. Authors such as Giovanni Bocaccio and Torquato Tasso claimed romantic jealousy to be a specifically female trait while Michel de Montaigne commented on the suspicious watchfulness to which Italian wives were subjected. Philosopher Niccolo Viti of Pistoia also regarded jealousy as a typically southern European trait, due to southern countries’ perception of immodesty as the primary source of dishonour in women. Gundersheimer writes that the presence of such theories ‘may underlie Shakespeare’s choice of a Moor as the archetype of the jealous husband’ in *Othello* – paving the way for future racial and cultural stereotypes. Likewise, Robert Burton in his influential work *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) claimed that jealousy was far more common in the southern climes.

In *Othello*, jealousy was famously defined as a ‘green-eyed monster’. Paul Mullen comments that the jealousy portrayed in both *Othello* (1604) and *The Winter’s Tale* (1610) is that of ‘a consuming passion driven onward by a sense of affronted honour, but in both instances based on error’. Here, the jealous parties are impervious to reason and jealousy leads to fatal consequences. This strongly negative assessment was echoed by Burton who claimed to write about jealousy so that readers who had experienced jealousy could recognize their error, and those readers who had not experienced jealousy could begin to detest it, avoid it and ‘dispossess others that are anywise affected with it’. However, historian Peter Stearns has emphasized that the early modern view of jealousy was not wholly negative. The etymology of the word *jealousy* shares a root with ‘zeal’. According to Stearns, jealousy could have the function of preserving social esteem in societies in which honour was a key tenet. Thus, jealousy was seen as a way of protecting the integrity of the family in a society in which monogamy was a major issue. A jealous defence of one’s rights could be ‘a good and legitimate defense’.

From a Swedish perspective, there are no studies that have specifically focused on the historical dimensions of romantic jealousy. The equivalent Swedish term for jealousy is *svartsjuka* (literally ‘black sickness’). According to modern definitions, it is denoted by a misbelief in someone else’s love and fear of that person’s interest in or love for someone
else.\textsuperscript{24} The etymology is uncertain, although according to one theory it stems from a saying in which the jealous party is described as wearing black socks.\textsuperscript{25} It is separated from avundsjuka (literally 'envy sickness'), which denotes the wish to be a part of or attain someone else’s advantages or benefits.\textsuperscript{26}

Regarding 18\textsuperscript{th}-century Swedish society, one is left with the impression that jealousy was not a major concern either on a social or a medical level, as its mention in sources are scarce. It is difficult to ascertain why this is the case. In her study of wife abuse in 19\textsuperscript{th}-century Sweden, Marie Lindstedt Cronberg asserts that jealousy formed no major part of court cases regarding domestic violence towards women. She attributes this to the relatively severe official punishments enforced in Sweden for infidelity (also effective in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century). As long as a wife had limited opportunity to obtain a divorce and infidelity was punished harshly by the courts, jealousy was not a central theme.\textsuperscript{27} This would mean that the Swedish legal framework and the way in which the state was responsible for condemning extramarital sex effectively marginalized the significance of jealousy. This can be contrasted with the cultural fixation with jealousy that Masha Belenky has identified in 19th-century France. Here, jealousy became a plotline of most major novels, a common theme in art and an important theme for both medical and moralist authors. Belenky associates this development to new legislation on marriage and inheritance that entitled all children born within a marriage to inherit, irrespective of whether or not the child was legitimate. This meant that a child conceived out of wedlock due to a wife’s infidelity had an equal right to inherit. Belenky writes that ‘in addition to the fear of emotional dispossession or the ridicule of cuckoldry, a man’s jealousy came to signify a means to protect his property from usurpation by another man’s children’.\textsuperscript{28} Here, the legal framework would be responsible for actualizing romantic jealousy on a societal level.

From a literary perspective, the few existing 18\textsuperscript{th}-century Swedish works to explicitly focus on romantic jealousy clearly associate it with violence. Two works from the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century grapple with romantic jealousy; the cautionary tale Reward for Improper Jealousy: A Necessary Mirror for Old Men Who Marry Young Women\textsuperscript{29} and a play by King Gustav III himself, bearing the title The Jealous Neapolitan, first performed at court in 1789.\textsuperscript{30} In both these texts, jealousy is portrayed as a destructive force, leaving death in its wake. They both depict men who are mistaken in their jealous assumptions, who use violence or force to isolate their spouses and who ultimately end up dead. Regarding the play by the king, it might be a telling fact that it is set in Southern Europe, given the association between romantic jealousy and southern nations. The overall impression is that, from a Swedish perspective, romantic jealousy was not a major issue on a societal level and when given attention was negatively portrayed.

Although ascribed negative connotations on a societal level, jealousy was nevertheless experienced on a personal level. In the research field of the history of emotions, the discrepancy between emotional ideals or norms and personal experience has been explicated by William Reddy. Reddy has posited the existence of emotional regimes, defining them as a ‘set of normative emotions and the official rituals, practices, and emotives that express and inculcate them’.\textsuperscript{31} By emotives Reddy is referring to emotional speech acts, utterances about emotions that serve to activate thought material that may correspond to the emotion claim being uttered. Through the use of emotives, individuals can both explore and alter their emotional states. According to Reddy, emotional regimes

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can proscribe the use of certain emotives, thereby causing suffering for the individual whose emotional navigation becomes restricted.\textsuperscript{32} Using the terminology of William Reddy, there are indications that romantic jealousy was proscribed by a potential Swedish emotional regime, thereby affecting Stenberg’s ability to emotionally navigate his experiences. Thus, Pehr Stenberg is addressing and attempting to account for an emotional experience that does not appear to be condoned on a societal level.

From an individual psychological perspective, there are several aspects that could serve to explain Stenberg’s jealousy and the painful emotional turmoil he experienced. As mentioned below, he enters into a new marriage shortly after being bereaved of his first wife and children and therefore has little time to process his profound loss. Stenberg, who displays insecurities related to his social background, is also now marrying a woman from a more elevated social position than himself. However, these factors are not the focus of Stenberg’s portrayal of his jealousy and consequently not the focus of this article, which examines how Stenberg himself accounts for his experience of jealousy. The contextual and conceptual links he makes in his struggle to understand and convey an all-consuming emotional experience illustrate the ways in which emotions are entangled in our lives. The concept of ‘entangled emotions and beliefs’ has been used by historian Susan Broomhall in an analysis of emotional performances in colonial encounters.\textsuperscript{33} In this article, it is used in an individual everyday context to highlight the complex ways in which emotions can be intertwined with beliefs, thoughts and ideals, as well as other emotions – an entanglement that can be examined in detail through a micro-historical analysis. Consequently, this article will examine jealousy in relation to love and marriage, honour, psychological and physical pathology and religion.

**Jealousy, love and marriage**

In the life description of Pehr Stenberg, the jealous suspicions that came to greatly affect his life are related to marital love – or rather the lack thereof. The saying that ‘who is not jealous does not love’ has been attributed to Saint Augustine, suggesting that the two emotions are integral to one another.\textsuperscript{34} Peter Stearns claims that ‘the idea that love naturally included jealousy, or a potential for jealousy’ was deeply rooted in traditional Western thought.\textsuperscript{35} However, previous research has shown that the idea that marriage necessarily included romantic love was not universally accepted in traditional Western thought. Instead, this has been defined as a product of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century.

The 18\textsuperscript{th} century has been viewed as a time in which the ideal of marriage for love or ‘companionate marriage’ became more firmly established. Although English historian Lawrence Stone’s claim that marriage developed from a pragmatic family affair into an individual choice based on affection has been widely contested, it appears clear that marriage founded on love at least gained considerable strength on a normative level in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{36} A greater emphasis was also placed on emotional intimacy in the conjugal relationship.\textsuperscript{37} The dissemination of this ideal was largely related to the rise of the novel in Great Britain. The depiction of marriage for love rather than material interest has been emphasized as a central theme in the novels of the latter half of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, in which the struggle between individual choice of marriage partner and parental objection frequently plays out.\textsuperscript{38} Stenberg himself was an avid reader of English novels in
Scandinavian translations, including the works of Henry Fielding and Samuel Richardson. In his life description, he explicitly states that they influenced the way in which he viewed romantic love. Research also shows that individuals were affected by these ideals in the process of choosing a marriage partner. Ethnologist Eva-Lis Bjurman has examined how some bourgeois women in Germany, Sweden and Denmark handled the new emphasis placed on love marriages during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. By studying ego documents, Bjurman demonstrates how the ideal of companionate marriage based on love created conflicts for women who had to navigate between their own emotional attachments, the will of their parents or guardians and the necessity of gaining financial support. These choices preoccupied the minds of young women and could lead to painful conflict. From a Norwegian perspective, Kari Telste has discerned a shift towards heightened emphasis on emotion in breach of promise cases around the end of the 18th century. Rather than placing emphasis on reason and presuming that affection was something that could grow with time, courts considered that there should be mutual affection at the start of a marriage. Loss of affection for the betrothed was also presented as an argument by men wanting to be freed from their promises of marriage.

It is evident that conflicting ideals of affection and pragmatism play out in Stenberg’s second marriage, while his first marriage was characterized by a strong emotional attachment. After experiencing great difficulty finding a wife who would suit his social standing as a priest, in 1794 Stenberg married his housekeeper, who had confessed to being in love with him. Although the parish was initially reluctant to accept her, Stenberg claims that she eventually gained their esteem and he was happy in a loving marriage. This happiness was short-lived as his wife died after delivering a stillborn son, as well as a live daughter, who also passed away a few months later. Merely months after Stenberg lost his wife and children, his parents and members of the local community started asking him whether he was considering remarrying. Stenberg also went on to propose to his second wife less than six months after he had been widowed and was eager for a swift reply. His new wife, Elisabeth Catharina Turdfjäll, was 27 years old and the daughter of an army major from a noble background but of limited financial means. Stenberg had proposed to Turdfjäll some years previously but she had not accepted his proposal because of a previous engagement, which was eventually broken off. The couple had rarely met. There were practical concerns regarding Stenberg’s wish to settle quickly into his new marriage. As servants were hired on an annual basis, Stenberg wanted to know whether he needed to hire help for an extra year or whether a new wife would take on some of the household tasks. Thus, his decision to remarry shortly after having been widowed appears to be informed by both social expectations and practical necessity. Nevertheless, it is clear from his description of his new marriage that he expects his wife to quickly display candour, love and affection towards him, rather than viewing love and intimacy as something that would grow with time.

Although Stenberg barely knows the woman he is marrying, he is initially surprised by their lack of emotional intimacy and perceives his wife as being quiet and reticent about sharing her thoughts and feelings with him. This is far from the complete candour he describes having witnessed between other spouses and has expected from the marriage into which he is entering. This, in turn, is coupled with her apparent lack of affection for him. While Stenberg claims to love his new wife tenderly, he perceives her as displaying a cold indifference towards him. This perception is not helped by his wife confessing that,
although not entirely devoid of feeling for him, she primarily married him to escape the
denigration of becoming an old maid. She also admits that she would rather have married
a civilian than a priest. However, as no civilian proposed, she chose the priest.\textsuperscript{46} This
admission of her pragmatic reasons for marrying as well as her cool demeanour undoubtedly
hurts and disappoints Stenberg, who had hoped for a more demonstrably loving
marriage. Stenberg channels this hurt and disappointment in a very specific direction –
fears that his wife will cheat on him. In Stenberg’s mind, her lack of affection makes it
more likely that she will be unfaithful and he dwells on all the signs of her indifference
towards him. While he notes that she greets visitors with a happy, friendly countenance
and way of speaking, Stenberg discerns little or no traces of friendliness and affection
towards him. He writes:

This aroused the thought in me that she does not love me, or at least not much; if she had felt
real kindness and love for me, she would surely treat me more tenderly and kindly; and
because she does not love me, she ought to easily surrender herself to infidelity, although
I have heretofore loved her so tenderly and honestly.\textsuperscript{47}

Stenberg writes that he cannot help comparing this situation with the ardent love his first
wife had shown him. For Stenberg, who admits to quickly remarrying partially due to
practical necessity, love is nevertheless a foundational component of a marriage. However,
he has entered into marriage with a woman who apparently does not share
this view. According to Stenberg’s reasoning, sexual fidelity is also contingent on love.
Although he describes his wife as a ‘worthy, good and agreeable spouse’,\textsuperscript{48} her good
character and willingness to follow decorum seem meaningless in contrast to her cold
demeanour towards him.

A local ensign [fänrik] by the name of Löfvenadler particularly becomes the target of
Stenberg’s jealous suspicions as he suspects that there are mutual feelings between the
ensign and his wife. One incident particularly awakens Stenberg’s misgivings. While
intending to visit Stenberg’s brother-in-law who was then staying with the Stenberg
couple, Löfvenadler chances upon Stenberg at home alone. They end up playing a game
of chess while waiting for the brother-in-law to return, during which time Stenberg’s wife
returns home from an errand and unexpectedly sees Löfvenadler. Stenberg describes how
this chance meeting affected his wife:

[H]er skin changed so remarkably; she blushed, the colour of scarlet, and looking at him her
eyes glistened like Venus and Jupiter when they meet in the firmament. I pretended not to
notice anything, although I stealthily and quickly glanced at her perhaps three times while
she came close to greet us. And the Ensign’s eyes were firmly fixed on her over my
shoulders. – Alas, I have never been so fortunate to receive such lively and tender looks
from my wife, not as her fiancé and even less as her husband.\textsuperscript{49}

This incident sends Stenberg into a painful emotional state and upsets him so much that
he is unable to focus on the game, quickly losing chess piece after chess piece. He finds
this exchange of glances to be clear evidence of their mutual understanding. The
references to blushing skin, glistening eyes and tender looks suggest that Stenberg
interprets the signs of infatuation that he would have liked to see from his wife directed
at someone else, prompting his jealousy. He also goes on to repeatedly interrogate his
wife about any present or past feelings for Löfvenadler.\textsuperscript{50}
Some historians have commented on how the increased impetus on marital love from the 18th century onwards affected romantic jealousy, coming to various conclusions depending on the context examined. Dawn Keetley traces how a change in the perception of jealousy played out in a judicial context in antebellum America. Examining published sermons, confessions and trial transcripts, Keetley shows how jealousy did not play a key role in descriptions of domestic violence or murder perpetrated by men prior to the 19th century. Love was not described as a component of marriage and violence was described in terms of anger caused by a wife’s failure to perform her main marital duties – caring for the household. By the end of the 1810s, jealousy started to feature in trial descriptions as a motive for domestic violence, although nevertheless viewed as a negative passion that should be controlled. This eventually gave way to the idea that a love that had been lost or betrayed was capable of overwhelming reason. Keetley associates the increased importance that was placed on romantic jealousy to the strengthened ideal of marriage based on love.51 Thus, it could be concluded that as long as love was not believed to be a central part of marriage, romantic jealousy was not a central explanatory factor for its ultimate breakdown – the killing of a spouse. Examining 19th-century jealousy on a more general normative level, Peter Stearns reaches a different conclusion regarding the relationship between marital love and jealousy. Mainly analysing American magazines and conduct literature, Stearns believes that the increased valuation of heterosexual and familial love had the effect of establishing a more hostile stance towards jealousy than had previously been the case in Western culture. Jealousy had no part in the morally transforming power attributed to love, partially demonstrated through a compact silence on the topic of jealousy.52 Jade Shepherd points to similar tendencies in late-Victorian Britain in which the ideal type of romantic affection was viewed as being free of jealousy by both journalists and authors of fiction, who instead defined jealousy as ‘absurd’ or ‘unreasonable’.53 Thus, on a more general normative level, jealousy would be incommensurate with the elevated familial love that characterized the 19th-century bourgeois ideal.

In the case of Pehr Stenberg, his account of his personal experiences implies a strong belief that marriage should be characterized by love, affection and emotional intimacy and the fact that it is not provides the basis for his jealous suspicions. In this reasoning, it is also love that prevents adultery, not societal regulations or a personal sense of propriety. Overall, it suggests that this Swedish marriage was profoundly affected by the existence of ideals that posited love as a foundational aspect of marriage and that the absence of such love was related to romantic jealousy.

Simultaneously, Stenberg’s jealousy was affected by contrasting images of a companionate marriage marked by mutual affection and emotional intimacy – that is, negative stereotypes of the shrewd and deceitful wife. The fundamental aspect of Stenberg’s jealous suspicions is his inability to trust in the faithfulness of his wife. Stenberg writes that when his suspicions of adultery are awoken, he is reminded of all the stories he has heard or read about unfaithful wives who feign innocence, all the while using tricks and arts to deceive their husbands.54 Furthermore, when finding no tangible proof to warrant his jealous suspicions, he thinks his wife may have used feminine guile [qvinnolist] to hide her infidelity.55
In the early modern Swedish discourse on marriage, the patriarchal dominion of men over women was taken for granted. However, such dominion was also depicted as always at risk of being subverted by women. Jonas Liliequist writes that while a pious and virtuous wife had the power to persuade her husband to do good, an evil woman had no counterpart among men where cruelty, venefulness and guile were concerned. Evil, quarrelsome women who opposed male domination were held up as warnings, usually with reference to Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon, included in early modern editions of the Swedish Bible.\(^{56}\)

Thus, the guilefulness and deceit that Stenberg associates with unfaithful wives was part of this larger discourse on marriage according to which the dominion of men was constantly being threatened. In this context, it is telling that Stenberg attributes his wife’s willingness to adjust her behaviour to his wishes as an important reason why his jealousy was eventually subdued. Stenberg writes that his wife’s pliantness and compliance, as well as her apparent willingness to please me in all things could naught but much heal my wounded heart and with time I became – although not very quickly – increasingly calm and content.\(^{57}\)

Thus, it is explicitly his wife’s willingness to relent to his will that helps Stenberg overcome his jealousy. This serves to exemplify how Stenberg’s jealousy is implicated in the gendered power dynamics of early modern marriage.

**Jealousy and honour**

As previously mentioned, jealousy was often related to the protection of personal honour and, according to Peter Stearns, could also be viewed as a legitimate defence of such honour.\(^{58}\) This connection between jealousy and honour can also be discerned in the experiences of Pehr Stenberg.

Like most early modern European societies, honour played a key role in early modern Sweden, in which honour was an essential principle of social cohesion. To be without honour was to lack a solid connection to the local community and thereby lack a social safety net. Because of this, individuals had to be constantly watchful of their honour and defend it in order to keep their position in the local community. In the Swedish legal system, individuals could also be condemned to an honourless position, and thereby placed in a very vulnerable state.\(^{59}\) However important, honour did not hold the same meaning for men and women. Marie Lindstedt Cronberg has elaborated on the gendered conceptions of honour that existed during the early modern period and asserts that while male honour could be viewed as multidimensional, female honour was more exclusively connected to women’s sexuality and their reproductive function of transferring property between generations. Male honour was largely centred on verbal trustworthiness in which displaying honesty, keeping your word and not slandering others were valued attributes. In addition, a man should be pious and not sexually promiscuous. Consequently, although male honour was not exclusively linked to sexual transgressions, according to Lindstedt Cronberg, such transgressions did reflect badly on them. Furthermore, both Swedish men and women lived in a country where comparatively harsh laws regulating
extramarital sexual relations were in place, meaning that the Lutheran state itself closely monitored and forcefully condemned extramarital sexual activities. In this context, it is not surprising that illicit sexual activity gave rise to shame and compromised personal honour. However, a change appears to have taken place during the latter half of the 18th century as men were more able to extricate themselves from the shame associated with illicit sexual relations. The compromising of female honour was still significant.60

From an international perspective, Sweden also stands out because the sexual transgressions of a wife did not necessarily reflect negatively on her husband. Thus, male honour was not necessarily strongly connected to female sexual virtue, as was the case in many other parts of Europe. In cases of infidelity, shame was directed at the erring party, but not necessarily at the wronged party.61 In keeping with this, Jonas Liliequist points to the relatively weak emphasis on the theme of the cuckold in the Swedish public imagination, in contrast to the continent and Great Britain. The Swedish equivalent of cuckold – hanrej – rarely featured in defamation suits and Sweden had no equivalent to the continental charivari or the English rough music processions wherein cuckolded men were shamed.62

Stenberg goes against this general image as he sees his wife’s suspected infidelity as directly affecting his own honour. This topic is touched upon in the incident in which his jealous suspicions are first awoken. Stenberg describes his thoughts as he waits in the street for the gate into his courtyard to be opened. According to his reasoning, his wife’s disregard for her honour in turn reflects on Stenberg’s own sense of honour:

Very concerned about this unexpected wait on the street outside my own gate, the following thoughts pierced my heart like an arrow, whence a painful anxiety crept into my chest: Alas, I thought, can I really believe that my wife is so forgetful of honour [areförgäten]63 that she receives visits from gentlemen during my absence and now, to much better hide her amants, not only has she shut both the gate and the shutters for so long, but is also deliberately delaying the opening of the gate so that she can hide him more easily. Thus, the longer I was forced to wait, the more impatient I became and my thoughts were transformed into certainty and, in my imagination, I considered my misery and dishonour to be indisputable, so that I was most upset when the gate was finally opened.64

Honour also becomes a central concern during a strange incident which, according to Stenberg’s complicated reasoning, relates to his wife’s sexual propriety. On the way out with his wife to visit friends on a winter’s evening, Stenberg stops to look inside a blue paper bag placed on the street just outside the gate to his courtyard, finding 5–6 dead mice inside the bag. Stenberg becomes completely consumed by what he defines as an ‘abject deed’ and is certain that this action was intended to insult him and his household. As ‘mouse’ is a Swedish synonym for female genitalia, Stenberg interprets the mice in the bag as a ‘whore sign’ alluding to his wife’s infidelity. While visiting his friends, he cannot stop thinking about what he found on the street and quickly makes an excuse to leave. He recounts the conversation between himself and his wife after they had both returned home, with him saying:

‘See here the whore sign! It is quite decent [vackert] and moderately honourable that you should be such a trollop,65 that such signs are posted at my gate for your sake!’ She responded resentfully: ‘How can I help that people with wretched minds have done such
a thing?’ Me: ‘I suspect you want me to imagine that such a sign has been put there for the sake of our maid? No, I am not so simple minded to believe such a thing’. I continued speaking for a while in such a tone for I believed myself so certain and sure that I had been dishonoured and was fully convinced that she had very well earned such punishment.66

According to Stenberg’s reasoning, the presumed adulterous behaviour of his wife strongly reflects on his personal honour as a husband. However, although honour was something that was supposed to be defended, Stenberg never mentions vindicating his position in any way. Apart from fantasizing about escaping his family life and assuming a completely new identity, Stenberg never contemplates ending his marriage on the grounds of adultery.67 Nor does he mention confronting the men he suspects are having affairs with his wife. This might be due to the fact that Stenberg’s suspicions are exactly that – suspicions – and he never finds any tangible signs of his wife’s infidelity. His passive response might also be connected to a development in the conception of honour during the latter half of the 18th century that has been emphasized by historians such as Pieter Spierenburg – a development defined as the ‘spiritualization of honour’. Spierenburg writes that ‘[w]hereas honor first denoted respect, deference, prestige, rank, or superiority, it came to denote admirable conduct, personal integrity, or inner sense of right and wrong’.68 This development particularly affected masculine honour, which was now increasingly associated with inner virtue, diminishing the need to defend honour through confrontation and violence.69 Although Stenberg sees himself as dishonoured, confrontation with other men does not appear to be an obvious course of action.

Even though Stenberg’s jealousy is connected to honour, neither Stenberg nor the local community appear to view it as a legitimate and just defence of that honour. Rather, romantic jealousy is connected to aspects distinctly unrelated to honour – shame and lack of esteem. Carolyn Strange and Robert Cribb define honour as ‘dependent on and generative of the desire for esteem in the eyes of others whose opinion matters’.70 Although Stenberg relates his wife’s presumed infidelity to honour, both dishonour, loss of esteem and shame are aspects associated with Stenberg’s own behaviour, with Stenberg explicitly stating that some of the actions he takes to ascertain whether or not his wife is being unfaithful are not part of an honourable comportment. He relates an incident in which his wife was going out to do some errands and describes deliberating on whether or not to secretly follow her to see where she would actually go:

She went on her way, after I had asked her not to stay away too long. But I could not be completely at ease at home, and in order to become more satisfied, I thought: I have to go out into the street to look whether I can see where she goes, so that I can be more content. Even though, in my mind I soon rejected such an undertaking as less honourable, it was impossible for me to refrain from doing so […].71

Furthermore, the fact that jealousy was not a legitimate defence of honour is indicated by Stenberg’s efforts to keep his jealous suspicions a private matter between himself and his wife, as well as his reactions when word of his suspicions started spreading around the local community.72 One of these incidents occurs when Stenberg’s sister-in-law is staying with them and happens to walk into the room when Stenberg and his wife are discussing
his jealous behaviour. The following day as Stenberg is putting on black shoes and socks, his sister-in-law comments obliquely and jestfully on the incident, referring to the saying that an unduly jealous individual wears black socks. Stenberg quotes her as saying: ‘So my brother-in-law goes around in black socks [. . .]. That is shameful; so beware of this; yes, do watch out, otherwise one does not deserve any esteem’.73 As this incident is related by Stenberg, his expressions of jealousy are deemed worthy of shame and unworthy of esteem. Stenberg goes on to note that her comments had a beneficial effect as his conscience told him that he had deserved reproach. He also notes feeling slightly ashamed that his sister-in-law knew about his jealousy.74 A sense of shame reawakens after Stenberg meets some acquaintances while sauntering around town and joins them for a walk. He writes that he overheard one of his male acquaintances saying to a female acquaintance: ‘He is jealous’, whereupon the woman replied ‘Oh gosh! Can he really be so weak!’ Stenberg describes his reaction upon hearing this:

These words, which I pretended not to hear, had a twofold effect on me; first I was troubled that this had become common knowledge, and then I became filled with shame. They obliterated all suspicions from my heart, at least for the time being.75

At one point, Stenberg himself visits a local man rumoured to be unduly jealous and finds his wife completely subjugated, not once looking up from her chores to acknowledge Stenberg as a guest in the house.76 Taken together, these incidents suggest that romantic jealousy was the subject of rumours and disapproval on a local level. Thus, the more general disapproval or silence on jealousy that appears to be prevalent on a societal level is reflected on a local level.

In this and other aspects, Stenberg’s account of his jealousy parallels that of another early modern man who has become known for his frank portrayal of his private life – English diarist Samuel Pepys. Although Pepys’ account of his own romantic jealousy has a much narrower scope, its frank depiction of the internal processing of jealousy offers a valuable comparison to Stenberg’s jealousy. Pepys’ depiction concerns a period of acute jealousy that started in 1663 after he came home to find his wife alone with her dance instructor, walking around, rather than dancing. Pepys starts suspecting that his wife is being unfaithful while he is away working and becomes completely consumed by her potential infidelity. Similar to Stenberg, this is an emotional state that Pepys is keen to hide, at first being hesitant to share his concerns, even with his wife. He also records feeling shame and a sense of disbelief at the actions he takes to ascertain whether or not his wife is being unfaithful, including trying to observe whether or not she is wearing underwear and inspecting the beds in his house.77 After finally revealing his suspicions to his wife, she refuses to see her dance instructor while Pepys is out of the house. Pepys notes feeling ashamed of such an arrangement, although preferring this to the two of them spending time alone.78

These examples indicate a complex relationship between honour and romantic jealousy. While jealousy was related to honour, it nevertheless appears to be a shameful feeling to experience. Thus, while jealousy is associated with a personal sense of honour, it does not appear to be part of a just defence of such honour. Overall, this speaks to the both key and complex position of honour in Stenberg’s experience of jealousy. When he is certain of his wife’s infidelity, Stenberg sees her honour as compromised – and, by extension, his own. Here, he apparently goes against a more general trend in Swedish discourse wherein men were not necessarily shamed by the sexual transgressions of their
wives. At the same time, Stenberg’s suspicions of infidelity and the behaviour related to his jealousy are a cause of dishonour and shame on his part. Furthermore, this indicates that jealousy was a negatively viewed or marginalized emotion on a local level, as well as on a wider societal level.

Jealousy, emotion and pathology

In the previous section, we saw how Stenberg’s jealous behaviour caused him shame. This section will further explore the emotional dimensions of Stenberg’s jealousy and the way in which it is pathologized by Stenberg himself. Although Stenberg admits that he is experiencing jealousy, the word ‘svartsjuka’ is rarely used and is instead substituted by other words. Stenberg variously describes his suspicions of his wife’s infidelity as a weakness, a sorrow, a delusion – and a form of insanity. Thus, his jealousy is defined as a flawed state of mind indicating a lack of strength, a painful emotional experience and as something pathological, disassociated from the realities of everyday life. It might be useful here to reconnect with William Reddy’s theory of emotives, which centres on the naming of emotion as a way of emotionally navigating through life. From this perspective, it is worth noting Stenberg’s decision to describe his experiences in terms other than jealousy. Although jealousy had negative connotations in contemporary society, the terms Stenberg uses in its place – weakness and insanity – are not necessarily more positive. However, they do serve to broaden his description of what he is experiencing. By pathologizing his jealousy, Stenberg also absolves himself from some of the blame for his behaviour. When defending his jealousy to his wife, he emphasizes the compulsive nature of his behaviour – that his suspicions enter his mind against his will. For instance, Stenberg recounts a conversation where his wife accused him of continually raising suspicions against her, even though she had repeatedly denied any wrongdoing. He details his reply:

“Yes,” I responded, “I suppose this is true, but I cannot help it. I want to be free from this, but such weakness overcomes me against my will and it is not possible for me to reason with myself. Instead, it grows worse with time so that I have to reveal myself to you and tell you all my thoughts, and my supposed reasons for my suspicions [...].”

Aaron Ben-Ze’ev asserts that jealousy involves ‘a negative evaluation of the possibility of losing something – typically, a unique human relationship – to someone else’. Thus, the emotional pain jealousy generates is not caused by some extraordinary occurrence, but is due to the fact ‘that something to which we consider ourselves entitled is in danger of being breached’. In modern psychology, jealousy is at times defined as a ‘complex’ emotion that encompasses many emotional states such as fear, anger and grief. Due to its complex nature, there is even a debate regarding whether jealousy should be viewed as a specific emotional state at all. The painful emotional state that romantic jealousy generates and the complex set of emotions that can accompany jealousy is present in Stenberg’s account in which he continually describes the unsettling emotional states caused by his jealousy, including a sense of uneasiness [oro], anguish [angest] and sorrow [sorg]. The height of emotional suffering is described in terms of being so full of anguish that he ‘can barely exist’, that his pain is ‘at times almost insufferable’ and that he experiences a ‘corrosive sorrow and painful anxiety’. He writes that his painful suspicions create ‘wounds in his heart’ and describes the
'bitter pain raging' in his breast.\textsuperscript{90} Conducting a funeral, he wishes he could be laid in the ground instead of the deceased in order to be free of his torment.\textsuperscript{91} These emotions are often connected to a circular chain of events during which his painful emotions are successively heightened. Stenberg describes how he will ruminate over his suspicions for a few days while his anguish grows stronger. Being unable to bear his emotions, he eventually confides his suspicions to his wife and convinces her to swear solemnly before God that she has not been unfaithful. While his anxiety is temporarily allayed by her protestations of innocence, his suspicions are soon aroused anew in a cycle that is repeated over and over.\textsuperscript{92} The connection between Stenberg’s rumination on jealous suspicions and a successively heightened anxiety is exemplified on an occasion when he returns home after ministering to a sick parishioner. During the journey back to his house, he starts brooding over his suspicions and imagines his wife engaging in all kinds of depravity while he is away. His anxiety is stirred as he enters the town and sees his house from a distance:

When I saw my house I felt the most vehement anguish, awoken by the following thought: I pray I will not witness something completely outrageous when I return, someone with my wife who has no reason to be there. And the closer I came to my house, the graver my suffering became, and reached its highest peak, so that I would have preferred to avoid returning home, had I been able to; yes, my pain was almost unbearable, but even so, I had to return home.\textsuperscript{93}

Here, again, parallels can be drawn with Samuel Pepys, who associates his jealousy with a range of emotions. Pepys writes of being ‘grieved to the very heart’ by his jealousy and describes how it makes ‘a very hell’ in his mind. He states that he will be ‘very unhappy’ if God does not remove it from him and recounts how his suspicions make him ‘vexed and angry’.\textsuperscript{94} When walking in the park and seeing a man who resembles his wife’s dance instructor at a distance, Pepys describes being overwhelmed by his reaction: ‘Lord, how my blood did rise in my face and I fall into a sweat from my old Jealousy and hate’.\textsuperscript{95}

As previously mentioned, Stenberg not only describes his jealous state as emotionally painful, but also views it as pathological. It is continually spoken of as a disease from which he hopes to be cured. The term he most commonly uses is ‘sinnessjukdom’, literally meaning ‘disease of the mind’ and an equivalent term for madness or insanity.\textsuperscript{96} What appears to be key to this definition of disease is the compulsive nature of his condition and what in hindsight he realizes are delusional thoughts. Stenberg also comments on the longevity of his pathological state of mind, writing that ‘a disease of the mind returns easily and often and requires much time to be completely cured’.\textsuperscript{97} These descriptions of disease, madness and compulsivity are, in turn, reflected in the account of Pepys. He references his ‘old disease of Jealousy’ and calls his long lingering suspicions of his wife ‘a madness not to be excused’.\textsuperscript{98} Pepys also confesses that it makes him ‘mad to see of what jealous temper I am, I cannot help it’.\textsuperscript{99}

How is this connection between jealousy and madness mirrored in contemporary medical discourse? In the 1740s, noted Swedish physician and botanist Carl von Linnaeus defined marital jealousy as belonging to a specific type of insanity that was focused on one object or obsession alone. Linnaeus also stated that this form of
marital jealousy amounted to poison when it was too strongly impressed upon the imagination, thus echoing the stance of other early modern thinkers. Furthermore, the general early modern interpretation of insanity posited that strong emotional experiences or 'passions' could destabilize mental equilibrium to the point of insanity. As can be seen in the introduction, this included jealousy, which was believed to disturb the reasoning process.

Modern medicine usually defines two pathological states of jealousy: delusional jealousy and obsessive jealousy. As the term implies, delusional jealousy is characterized by delusional suspicions of jealousy and has been linked to patients experiencing psychosis. Obsessive jealousy, on the other hand, has been linked to obsessive-compulsive disorder. This form of pathological jealousy often encompasses behaviours involving ‘excessive checking’ in efforts to ascertain whether or not a partner has been unfaithful. This includes repeatedly interrogating a partner about their whereabouts or previous romantic relationships, cross-examination in order to extract confessions from a partner, following a partner and searching through their clothes and possessions. All these actions are carried out by Stenberg in order to verify whether or not his wife has been unfaithful. Retrospective diagnosis is generally not a fruitful way of addressing historical sources and my purpose here is not to diagnose Stenberg according to modern definitions. The point I would like to make is that Stenberg regards the same type of behaviour that currently forms part of a psychological diagnosis as pathological.

However, Stenberg’s jealousy is not restricted to an illness of the mind; it is also present in his body. Stenberg describes how gout located in his right hip moves and attaches itself to his chest when he is experiencing his most painful episodes of jealousy. The gout is intimately linked to his emotional state because as soon as he regains his peace of mind, the gout ceases to affect his chest:

Another matter, which often awoke and maintained my anxiety and insanity, was an internal illness. I have previously mentioned [...] how I had fallen and thereafter experienced gout pains in my left thigh, which afflicted me somewhat for two years, maybe a bit longer. Now when my insanity began, as soon as I became anxious and worried, the gout moved to my chest, keeping to its outer parts, but particularly residing in my sternum [...] It often attached itself to my heart: and one can easily understand how this awoke my anguish and uneasiness. For, as soon as it afflicted my heart, I remembered my sorrows which thereby increased; and the other way around: as soon as some circumstance anew awoke my suspicions and consequently my anguish, the gout suddenly afflicted my heart once again. This continued for 2–3 years, which I clearly noted several times. And it was curious; the same extent that I regained my peace of mind, the same extent the gout ceased to afflict my chest.

Viewed from a modern perspective, Stenberg’s description resembles the anxiety and chest pains that sometimes accompany panic attacks. However, for Stenberg, this interplay between a disease of the mind and of the body has a logical causality. This type of interlinkage between mind and body can be discerned in both ego documents and medical treatises from the 17th and 18th centuries. From a theoretical-medical perspective, this was to be expected as both the humoural-pathological medical theory that had long underpinned European medical thought and the nerve theory that grew in dominance during the latter half of the 18th century posited that the emotions could
affect bodily health. Roy Porter highlights the long history of this intertwining between mind and body, noting that even though scientific advances were made from the 17th century and onwards

everyday medicine, for both mind and body, remained as routinely psychosomatic as ever, presuming – as common experience suggested – a two-way traffic between mind and body within the whole person as integral to both the cause and cure of afflictions.

Thus, in the case of Stenberg, jealousy is connected to a range of other emotions so painful that he can hardly bear them. This state is not only described as emotionally painful, but also as pathological – a pathology that extends to both mind and body.

Jealousy and religion

As Stenberg was a priest by profession, it is not surprising that this trying period of his life would be interpreted through a religious framework. Stenberg struggles to find a meaning for what he is experiencing and provides himself and his readers with various religiously grounded explanations, casting his jealousy as either a punishment or a trial from God, or the work of the Devil.

Punishment for sin is an integral part of the Christian faith. In early modern Sweden, there were plenty of examples of biblical punishment in sermons, as well as in political and legal texts. In 1608, the Ten Commandments became the basis of Swedish law, making punishment in a very literal sense related to sin. While there was a distinctly collective view of sin during the early modern period wherein the transgressions of a few could lead to collective punishments such as famine, war and epidemics, punishment could also be meted out by God on an individual level. God punished sinners during their earthly lives with misfortunes and death. However, there was also a widespread belief that God subjected righteous Christians to accidents and misfortunes in order to test their faith. Kristina Savin points to the paradox that the same kind of misfortunes that were used to illustrate God’s punishment could also be interpreted as a sign of His love and grace. Savin writes that the notion of a trial is the most common explanation for misfortunes and accidents in many biographical sources, including autobiographies, memoirs and funeral sermons, while individual references to godly punishment are more scarce.

Here, Stenberg appears to go against the grain by viewing his jealousy as both a punishment and a trial. At times, Stenberg expresses the belief that his jealousy is a punishment from God, for example, because he did not pray enough for marital happiness. As his first marriage had been happy, he had not been diligent in praying for the same outcome in his second marriage. Consequently, Stenberg interprets his marital unhappiness as God’s way of showing him that human prosperity is precarious when it is not aided by prayer and God’s help. At the same time, he believes that his turbulent marriage constitutes a trial from God that will lead to his betterment and ‘much greater fortune and happiness in the future’. Consequently, Stenberg’s conjugal misfortune is cast as both a punishment and a trial.
Stenberg describes how he often lays awake at night when his wife is sleeping, mulling over different scenarios of her infidelity. On some occasions, he is convinced of his wife’s innocence; on other occasions he is certain that she is being unfaithful. When convinced of the latter, Stenberg equates his wife’s infidelity with a punishment from God. He recounts his thoughts as he turns to the Lord:

Oh my Lord [...], it has pleased You to punish me for my sins and transgressions in this manner. Yes, sadly I have surely deserved such punishment. But have mercy on this weak human and give me strength to bear the burden it has pleased You to impose on me, and punish, Lord, with mercy and pity and not according to what I have deserved [...].

Here, a cheating wife is equated with godly punishment for the sins and transgressions that Stenberg has committed during his life. When viewing the matter in a more positive light, Stenberg becomes convinced of his wife’s innocence. This leads him to view his jealous suspicions as the work of the Devil:

This must surely be a temptation from the Devil intended, if possible, to sow a seed of dissension between us so that he may make us completely unhappy – something God has given him leave to attempt. I have heard of the marriage devil and have now surely experienced his attempts. He, who doubtlessly knows my weak side, thrusts all sorts of mad imaginings into my mind, which he then vehemently inflames and fuels: but God help me resist and conquer this!

Thus, while thinking about his wife’s likely infidelity, Stenberg construes it as punishment. While realizing the unlikeness of the scenarios he creates in his mind, he believes them to be the work of the Devil. The Lutheran worldview posited an ongoing struggle between God and the Devil in the world. The actions of everyday men and women were given increased impetus as they were directly related to this struggle between good and evil. Believers had to support everything that belonged to God and ward off the call of the Devil. The fight against the Devil was supposed to be fought on all levels of society, both internally by individuals, as well as broadly through societal laws and through religious teachings. While bad deeds and divergence from faith strengthened the Devil, piousness and obedience protected the realm of God. The view of this struggle varied over time. During the 17th century, the Devil was believed to manifest in person on earth, bartering for souls and offering magical powers. This corporeal incarnation of the Devil was dismissed during the latter part of the 17th century and was not accepted by 18th-century theology. In the quote above, Stenberg refers to hearing about the marriage devil. This was another name for the Hebrew demon Asmodeus – a disturber of marital peace first mentioned in the book of Tobin. In early modern Swedish marriage tracts, the marriage devil is depicted as a figure who ‘constantly bided his time until he could blow up the tiny differences of everyday life into hatred and bitterness’. This indicates a broader belief that the Devil could be responsible for disrupting marital harmony. Thus, Stenberg’s own emotional struggle is tied to the spiritual struggle between good and evil and he calls on God to help him resist the work of the Devil. The Christian notions of punishment, trial and workings of the Devil therefore serve as an important explanatory framework in Stenberg’s experience of jealousy.
Conclusion

From a wider perspective, romantic jealousy appears to have been overwhelmingly negatively defined in early modern Western society – as madness or poison, as something unrelated to reason. However, there are indications that jealousy could also be perceived as a legitimate defence of personal honour. This does not apply to Pehr Stenberg, who lived in a society in which jealousy was apparently a marginalized emotion. From a Swedish perspective, this could be related to the country’s legal system, which was responsible for handling cases of extramarital sexual activity, thereby delegitimizing personal efforts to guard fidelity or vindicate infidelity. Using the theoretical framework of William Reddy, Stenberg could be defined as living in an emotional regime in which romantic jealousy was proscribed. Nevertheless, this emotion was experienced by Stenberg on a personal level. His vivid and detailed account demonstrates his attempt to make sense of his experience and, in doing so, he displays the complex ways in which emotions are entangled in our own historical contexts. Thus, Pehr Stenberg’s unusual account of his jealousy reveals the cultural models or explanatory frameworks available to convey this experience. Through Stenberg’s text, we can perceive how emotions are entangled with beliefs, conceptions and ideals, as well as other emotions. In the case of Pehr Stenberg, jealousy cannot be narrowly defined. Jealousy is entangled with ideals of romantic love as an important component of marriage, as well as early modern conceptions of honour. However, being a negatively valued emotion, its existence on a personal level and the suspicious behaviour it generates result in dishonour and shame. The pain and turmoil that accompany romantic jealousy are described in relation to a range of emotions. This turmoil is in itself defined as a mental pathology, linking it to early modern conceptions of how powerful affects or passions could destabilize mental equilibrium to the point of insanity. However, this pathology does not exist in the mind alone. The physical manifestation of jealousy described in Stenberg’s account draws attention to the strong interlinkage between body and mind that was present in early modern conceptions of illness. Importantly, jealousy is also linked to power and gender. It is evident that stereotypes of women fuel Stenberg’s jealous suspicions. In turn, these discourses were related to contemporary fears of men losing their dominion in marriage. The fact that Stenberg’s suspicions were subdued after his wife learned to adjust her behaviour in accordance with his requests, suggests that his jealousy started to dissipate when his authority in the marriage was reinforced. Stenberg’s jealousy and the toils it took on his marriage are also interpreted through a religious framework. His jealousy is cast as both a godly punishment and as a trial, as well as forming part of the ongoing struggle between God and the Devil.

In several respects, Stenberg’s description shares similarities with Samuel Pepys’ own account of jealousy. The shame surrounding acts prompted by jealousy and the desire to keep the experience quiet are described by both men. They both depict jealousy as being related to a range of painful or destabilizing emotions. Both men also relate jealousy to madness, disease and compulsivity. Although the two accounts were written over one hundred years apart, they reveal similar struggles with what appears to have been an overwhelmingly negative emotional experience in an early modern context. Overall, although comprising a single account, the Life
Description of Pehr Stenberg manages to display the multidimensional nature of romantic jealousy and the very historically specific ways in which we explain and process our emotional experiences.

Notes

1. Stenberg, *Pehr Stenbergs levernesbeskrivning*, D. 4, 21. All quotes have been translated by the author. Punctuation has been modernized in some cases. The work will be referenced as D. 4 in the following notes.
2. These incidents are described continually from the start of the fourth volume of Stenberg’s life description, referenced above.
3. Stenberg, D. 4, 127.
4. Stenberg, D. 4, 191.
5. This development is described in more detail below.
6. Members of the nobility could be extended the privilege of employing a private priest if they were not able to attend regular service in the state church.
7. For a biographical description, see Elgh and Stenberg, ‘Den långa bildningsresan’.
8. Dahlbacka, ‘En bondson blir präst,’ 60–61.
9. These particularly recur in parts 1 and 2 of his description: Stenberg, *Pehr Stenbergs levernesbeskrivning*, D. 1 and D. 2.
10. Stenberg’s work has been made available in a four-volume series by the research archive at Umeå University.
11. Stenberg, D. 1, 388.
12. Practical details could include information on hunting techniques. See Stenberg, D. 4, 192–194.
13. Stenberg marked sections that were not to be printed in the event of publication. For more on the source material, see Stenberg, D. 1, 9–14.
14. Seigel, *The Idea of the Self*, 210.
15. Mascuch, *Origins of the Individualist Self*; Amelang, *The Flight of Icarus*, 29, 123–125.
16. McKeon, ‘Biography, Fiction, and the Emergence of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain,’ 339.
17. Trivellato, ‘Is There a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?’ 3–4. For more on this, see Magnusson, *Emotional Experience and Microhistory*, 27–29.
18. Gundersheimer, ‘The Green-Eyed Monster,’ 328.
19. Gundersheimer, ‘The Green-Eyed Monster,’ 325.
20. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Third partition 264.
21. Mullen, ‘Jealousy,’ 595
22. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Third partition 257–258.
23. Stearns, *Jealousy*, 1. See also Mullen, ‘Jealousy,’ 594.
24. *Svenska Akademiens Ordbok*. Search word: svartsjuka.
25. Hellquist, *Svensk etymologisk ordbok*, 914.
26. *Svenska Akademiens Ordbok*. A search for avundsjuka redirects to the archaic afund.
27. Lindstedt Cronberg, *Med våldsam hand*, 302.
28. Belenky, *The Anxiety of Dispossession*, 20.
29. [Anon.], *Belöning för otidig svartsjuka*.
30. Gustav III, *Swartsjuke neapolitanaren*.
31. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, 129.
32. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, 108, 128–129.
33. Broomhall, ‘Performances of Entangled Emotions and Beliefs’.
34. Mullen, ‘Jealousy’, 594.
35. Stearns, *Jealousy*, 15.
36. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England*. For an overview of the debate resulting from Stone’s work, see Berry’s and Foyster’s introduction in *The Family in Early Modern England*. The increased importance of love in the 18th-century idea of marriage has also been emphasized in German sociologist Niklas Luhmann’s *Liebe als Passion*. From a French perspective, Maurice Daumas charted the increased importance of the love marriage on an ideological level in *Le mariage amoureux*.

37. Katie Barclay, *Love, Intimacy and Power*, Chapter 5.

38. The shift from consanguineal to conjugal kinship ties has been explored by Ruth Perry in *Novel Relations*. The paradigmatic shift from arranged to companionate marriages in the English novel has been examined by Katherine Sobba Green in *The Courtship Novel*, Chapter 13. See also Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, “Chapter 5 and Marlene LeGates, *The Cult of Womanhood in Eighteenth-Century Thought*.

39. See Stenberg’s description of reading Fielding’s *Tom Jones*: D. 1, 254. Stenberg even attempted to write a novel set in England to convey his intentions and emotions to a woman to whom he had proposed: D. 2, 183.

40. Bjurman, *Catrines intressanta blekhet*.

41. Telste, *Brutte lafter*, 449–451.

42. Stenberg, *Pehr Stenbergs levernesbeskrivning*. D. 3, 455, 470.

43. Stenberg, D. 3, 473.

44. Stenberg, D. 3, 484.

45. Stenberg, D. 4, 42.

46. Stenberg, D. 4, 12.

47. Stenberg, D. 4, 25.

48. Stenberg, D. 4, 93.

49. Stenberg, D. 4, 70.

50. Stenberg, D. 4, 71, 92.

51. Keetley, ‘From Anger to Jealousy,’ 273–276.

52. Stearns, *Jealousy*, 21–22.

53. Shepherd, ‘I Am Not Very Well I Feel Nearly Mad When I Think of You,’” 280.

54. Stenberg, D. 4, 24–25.

55. Stenberg, D. 4, 43.

56. Liliequist, ‘Changing Discourses of Marital Violence,’ 3. For more on the discourses of gendered power in marriage, see Karlsson Sjögren, *Hopes and Fears of Marriage* and Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England*.

57. Stenberg, D. 4, 111.

58. See note 21.

59. Österberg, *Folk förr*, 167; Lindstedt Cronberg, ‘Dagens hedersmord kontra nordiska kvinnors historia,’ 193.

60. Lindstedt Cronberg, ‘Dagens hedersmord kontra nordiska kvinnors historia,’ 196.

61. Lindstedt Cronberg, ‘Dagens hedersmord kontra nordiska kvinnors historia,’ 200.

62. Liliequist has touched upon this theme in several publications. See for example Liliequist, ‘Introduction,’ 124; Liliequist, ‘Från niding till sprätt,’ 74–76. For more on the theme of the cuckold, see Corcoran, ‘Cuckoldry as Performance’.

63. The word *åra* was often used together with honour and has a near-identical meaning. It translates as *honder* in Gustaf Widegren’s Swedish-English dictionary from 1788: Widegren, *Svenskt och engelskt lexicon*.

64. Stenberg, D. 4, 20.

65. Stenberg uses the word *kofsa*, a local word meaning a loose or lewd woman.

66. Stenberg, D. 4, 57.

67. Stenberg, D. 4, 227.

68. Spierenburg, *A History of Murder*, 9.

69. Regarding the Swedish context, Jonas Liliequist has observed this development within the nobility: Liliequist, ‘From honour to virtue’.

70. Strange and Cribb, ‘Historical Perspectives on Honour, Violence and Emotion,’ 10.
71. Stenberg, D. 4, 80.
72. Stenberg makes his wife promise not to mention his ‘weakness’ to anyone else. See Stenberg: D. 4, 28.
73. Stenberg, D. 4, 77–78.
74. Stenberg uses the word blygsel, which translates as shame in Widegren’s dictionary: Widegren, Svenskt och engelskt lexicon.
75. Stenberg, D. 4, 79.
76. Stenberg, D. 4, 85.
77. Pepys, The Diary of Samuel Pepys, 140, 157.
78. Pepys, The Diary of Samuel Pepys, 161. Pepys also explicitly attempts to show a merry and kind disposition towards the dance instructor in order to prevent his further knowledge of the matter.
79. Reddy’s theory mainly concerns verbal utterances in the first person, although he uses the theory to analyse writing as well in his own empirical work: Reddy, The Navigation of Feeling, 166–169.
80. Stenberg, D. 4, 28. See also page 75.
81. Ben-Ze’ev, ‘Jealousy and Romantic Love,’ 40.
82. Ben-Ze’ev, ‘Jealousy and Romantic Love,’ 41.
83. Ben-Ze’ev, ‘Jealousy and Romantic Love,’ 42–44.
84. Chung and Harris, ‘Jealousy as a Specific Emotion’.
85. Oro translates as uneasiness, disquietude and anxiety in Widegren’s dictionary: Widegren, Svenskt och engelskt lexicon.
86. Stenberg, D. 4, 27.
87. Stenberg, D. 4, 22.
88. Stenberg, D. 4, 36.
89. Stenberg, D. 4, 53.
90. Stenberg, D. 4, 42.
91. Stenberg, D. 4, 74.
92. Stenberg, D. 4, 27.
93. Stenberg, D. 4, 67.
94. Pepys, The Diary of Samuel Pepys. All quotes can be found on pages 157–158.
95. Pepys, The Diary of Samuel Pepys, 228.
96. See, for example, Stenberg, D. 4, 20, 25, 51, 62.
97. Stenberg, D. 4, 26.
98. Pepys, The Diary of Samuel Pepys, 158, 165.
99. Pepys, The Diary of Samuel Pepys, 278.
100. Uddenberg, Linné och mentalsjukdomarna, 79, 81. For more references of jealousy as poison, see note 18.
101. Porter, Mind-forg’d Manacles, Chapter 1; Hodgkin, Madness in Seventeenth-Century Autobiography, Chapter 3; Eriksson, Vägen till centralhospital, Chapter 3.
102. See note 16 above.
103. Almeida Leite et al., ‘Obsessive versus delusional jealousy’.
104. Ecker, ‘Non-delusional Pathological Jealousy as an Obsessive-Compulsive Spectrum Disorder,’ 206.
105. Karenberg, ‘Retrospective Diagnosis’.
106. Stenberg, D. 4, 92.
107. Huffman et al., ‘Panic Disorder and Chest Pain’.
108. For more on the connection between emotion and physical illness in ego documents, see Weissner, Ill Composed and Lindblom, Känslans patriark 141–144. For more on humoral pathology, see Bound Alberti, Matters of the Heart, 18. For more on nerve theory, see Vila, ‘Introduction,’ 4.
109. Porter, Mind-forg’d Manacles, 13.
110. Savin, Fortunas klädnader, 131.
For collective views on punishment, see: Malmstedt Helgdagsreduktionen, 193; Larsson Heidenblad, Vårt eget fél, Chapter 3.

Savin, Fortunas klädnader, 209.

Stenberg, D. 4, 93.

Stenberg, D. 4, 28.

Stenberg, D. 4, 28.

Eklund, ‘Drängen Henrich Michelssons änglasyner,’ 58. Lindstedt Cronberg, ‘Guds folk och Djävulens anhängare,’ 116–118. For more on the Devil, see Muchembled, A History of the Devil.

Oja, Varken Gud eller natur, 141–144.

Lindstedt Cronberg, ‘Guds folk och Djävulens anhängare,’ 116–118.

Liliequist, ‘Changing Discourses of Marital Violence,’ 4.

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Notes on contributor

Ina Lindblom is a historian at Umeå University. Her main interests lie in cultural historical dimensions of the 18th century, particularly emotions and their relation to status and gender.

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