

*Early Modern Autobiography in Tallinn: David Gallus' Anotationes*¹

AIGI HEERO

Abstract. The present study analyzes an autobiographical text with the title *Anotationes*, written in Tallinn in 1650–1659. The author of this text is David Gallus, who was born in Germany in 1603. He came to Tallinn in 1631 and became cantor of the Tallinn Gymnasium in 1634. In *Anotationes* he depicts his daily life, including the financial and bureaucratic problems related to his work. Gallus' text could also be read as “manifestation of a heterologous subjectivity” (Kormann 2004): the author portrays his life by describing mainly the relationships in the social groups to which he belongs or by analyzing certain events or incidents which he feels connected to, rather than by revealing his own feelings and opinions. Therefore, *Anotationes* gives us an overview of Gallus' personal life and, concurrently, an overview of the general conditions in the Tallinn Gymnasium and the city of Tallinn in the middle of the 17th century.

Keywords: Gallus, David; Literature of 17th century in Tallinn; Tallinn Gymnasium; Early modern autobiography

Autobiography, originally a 19th century term, generally denotes a self-written account of the life of a person or a narrative that is retrospective, chronological and focuses on the development of the author's personality (see Smyth 2010: 13). However, superimposing such modern concepts of autobiography on early modern texts could be strongly questionable. When talking about notions like “personality” or “identity”, we must keep in mind that in the pre-Enlightenment era these concepts were understood in terms of externally formulated social roles (Howard 2006: 217). According to Conal Condren, a sense of “office” rather than authentic selfhood shaped lives in the early modern period, that is the conduct of a persona was predicated in terms of responsibilities and duties with their correlative enabling liberties or rights (Condren 2006: 36–37).

¹ The author of this paper received support from the ETF (Estonian Science Foundation), grant No 9026 *Cultural Contacts and Their Reflection in the (Auto)biographical Texts from the Early Modern Period*.

Consequently, if a man of the early modern age wanted to record the milestones in his life or describe his thoughts and views, he usually employed rather conventional forms of writing, such as account books, almanacs, commonplace books etc. On the one hand, these records act mostly as a declaration of certain corporate memory; on the other hand, however, they may also reflect the author's own reasons for writing and documenting his worldviews (Lundin 2012: 256–257). Similarly, Eva Kormann considers the autobiography of the 17th century as a “manifestation of a heterologous subjectivity”, i.e. the author of an autobiographical text depicts his life by describing mainly the relationships within the social groups to which he belongs or by analyzing certain events or incidents which he feels connected to, rather than by revealing his own feelings and opinions (Kormann 2004: 300). This raises the question of whether the more general terms like “life-writing” or “ego-documents” may be more useful to describe the nature of autobiographical texts of the early modern age. At this point, Adam Smyth proposes to deploy the term “life-writing” and also persist with “autobiography”, because it helps to “illuminate the instability of the forms of early modern written lives” (Smyth 2010: 14) and thus to focus more clearly on the difference and variability of early modern life-writing (ib.).

In 2012 a research project called *Cultural Contacts and Their Reflection in the (Auto)biographical Texts from the Early Modern Period* was initiated at Tallinn University. The goal of this project is to analyze the different aspects of cultural contacts between Estonia and Western Europe, using sources like various (half)fictional texts (such as diaries, letters, travel narratives, also occasional poetry) and documentary texts (e.g. probate inventory lists) created in early modern Tallinn. These texts, even though not written in Estonian, are still a very important part of Estonian literary culture. However, when analyzing these texts one should consider the literary traditions that prevailed in Western Europe, since most authors came to Tallinn from there (chiefly from Germany). In the present study an autobiographical text from early modern Tallinn will be first introduced and then analyzed in view of the latest research outcomes, i.e. a text written in Tallinn, Estonia will be placed in a broader, international context.

The Tallinn City Archive contains a manuscript of the 17th century, which includes a German-language document: David Gallus' *Anotationes* (written ca. 1650–1659)². Gallus, the author of the text, came to Tallinn in 1631 and worked as cantor of the Tallinn Gymnasium from 1634 to 1658. At this point, the duties of a cantor should be defined more clearly. The cantor was the chief

² Unpublished manuscript (TLA 230-1-Ak 9a). All quotes from *Anotationes* will be given as in-text citations with the page number (recto or verso).

singer, and usually instructor, who supervised the church choir's singing and prepared musical arrangements for the services in church. In some cases, the cantor was also involved in the city administration or taught music in schools. In the specific case of Protestant churches in Germany and in Northern European cities (as well as in Tallinn), the title of cantor usually referred to a musician who was responsible for the choir and organ music in principal churches; he was also obliged to teach music and some basic subjects in the middle school or gymnasium and to provide music for wedding ceremonies and funerals (see Heinmaa 1999: 15–22; Schmidt 2011).

In *Anotationes*, Gallus portrays his daily life, his family relationships and various problems associated with his position at work. This document is particularly important from the local (Estonian) perspective. The readers receive new information about the Tallinn Gymnasium, especially about the personal and financial relationships between the professors, and about musical life in Tallinn in the first half of the 17th century. Likewise, *Anotationes* represents an exemplary “ego-document” of the 17th century, which can be viewed as a result of a retrospective, mediated and intertextual process (see Smyth 2010: 3).

David Gallus was born in 1603 in Watzkendorf, a small town in Neubrandenburg (today the northeastern part of Germany). He attended school in Magdeburg between 1622 and 1629. One of his teachers was Sigismund Evenius, one of the best-known German educators of the 17th century and a reformer of the school system. In 1629 Gallus began his studies at the University of Wittenberg. In 1631 the city of Magdeburg was destroyed by the troops of the Catholic League in the course of the Thirty Years' War. Gallus who had deposited all his possessions (books, clothes and a sum of 120 thaler) in his brother's house in Magdeburg lost everything. After that, he once again ran across Sigismund Evenius, who had escaped from the war-torn Magdeburg and found shelter in Wittenberg. Evenius, having already decided to go to Tallinn/Reval, invited Gallus to join him. On 17th September 1631 Gallus and Evenius arrived in Tallinn (see also Klöker 2005 II: 671–672). At this point, it is important to mention that in the early 1630s a number of scholars travelled to Estonia mainly from Germany. Above all they were searching for refuge from the Thirty Years' War. Many immigrants, like Evenius and Gallus, had lost everything during the war in Germany and sought a new beginning in Tallinn. This town became their destination because it was dominated by the German language and culture. (Heero 2011: 327–328) As there was no direct military action taking place in Tallinn, the situation in the town could be described as relatively peaceful. However, at this time Tallinn as a province of the Swedish Empire was suffering from economic hardships, because the King of Sweden

who was engaged in continuous warfare (for instance with Poland in 1600–1629) required ever bigger resources (Heinmaa 1999: 28).

In the first three years after his arrival in Tallinn, Gallus earned his living as a private teacher; in 1634 he became cantor of the Tallinn Gymnasium. In this position Gallus taught music, mainly choral singing. At the same time he was the chief cantor of Tallinn as well. He was in charge of the choirs of the churches of Oleviste and Niguliste, conducting them every Sunday during the services. He obtained remarkable results: in cooperation with the two main churches of Tallinn he established an excellent choir at the Gymnasium. For example, some of the songs in the repertoire were written for eight voices. The works of composers like Praetorius, Demantius and Hasler were performed. (Saha 1972: 43) In addition, Gallus was responsible for providing musical arrangements for wedding ceremonies and funerals; these occasions enabled him to earn extra income because his regular salary from the Gymnasium was not very high (100 thaler). However, Gallus had to share his supplemental earnings with the other professors of the Gymnasium and, to make matters worse, he often did not receive his salary at all. His employers, the municipal council and the district officials, were probably on the verge of bankruptcy because of the wartime deficiency. As told by Gallus in *Anotationes*, his employers continually gave excuses for failing to pay. For this reason probably, the major part of *Anotationes* depicts Gallus' miserable economic situation and his constant struggle to survive.

Gallus was married twice and had seven children. Six of them died very young; only one daughter reached adulthood. Gallus died in 1659 in Tallinn. During the last few years of his life he was writing his autobiography titled *Anotationes*. He probably started writing between 1650 and 1657. This assumption is based on the fact that the events in Gallus' life have been described chronologically, some with the exact dates. For example, on page 34 Gallus notes the death of his daughter Anna in 1648 but does not mention the death of his daughters Elisabeth and Maria, who both deceased in 1657. In this year, the plague caused havoc in Tallinn; in Gallus' family only one daughter and he himself survived. The documentation of this very sad event is the last entry in *Anotationes* (Gallus 38r). Oddly enough, when comparing the first and the last pages of *Anotationes* we come to realize that there is virtually no change in handwriting. This means that the whole text must have been written during a relatively short period of time.

Anotationes opens with an overview of Gallus' ancestry. The readers receive very detailed information about Gallus' parents and grandparents and also about his brothers and sister (Gallus 7r). Next, Gallus describes his school years, the destruction of Magdeburg and the encounter with Evenius (Gallus

7v-8r). The journey to Tallinn, however, is summarized in a few sentences (Gallus 8r). After that, Gallus briefly depicts his first years in Tallinn, and then gives an account of the problems connected with his position at work (Gallus 8v pp). The next important topic in *Anotationes* is the family relationships. With deep emotion Gallus describes his first marriage to Anna Burmann and the subsequent illness and death of both his newborn son and his wife (Gallus 20r-v). The next chapter describes Gallus' marriage to Anna Gutzlaff. The readers learn about the circumstances leading to his second marriage. (According to Gallus, he was unable to run the household on his own.) Then he narrates the birth of his children and the death of most of them in chronological order (Gallus 23r pp). The next rather short chapters depict the everyday life events of the married couple. For example, one short chapter describes Gallus' struggle for an inherited storage house, which the former owner had rented to Mr. Derenthal, who flatly refused to move his belongings out of the building. The matter was solved only after the intervention of the municipal council (Gallus 30r pp). As mentioned above, the last entry of *Anotationes* provides an account of the outbreak of the plague of 1657, the death of Gallus' family members and their funerals (Gallus 38r).

Wilhelm Kühlmann characterizes the autobiographical texts of the early modern age as documents which can be compared to chronologically organized household account books. According to Kühlmann, the autobiographies of this era focus mainly on the listing of unemotional facts, and usually there is no proper narrative structure and style (Kühlmann 1993: 193). This is also true for *Anotationes*. Gallus presents plenty of facts, sometimes even in the form of a chart or list. For instance, in the first part that recounts the history of Gallus' family the author names his family members one by one and adds some facts and figures about them:

Meine leibliche Brüder haben geheißē d[er] 1 *Bartholomaeus* (welcher meiner Sehl. Eltern erstes Kind gewesen; und ist den 1. Martii, Ao 1620, im 21 Jahr seines Alters, [...] gestorben). Die folgenden sind alle jünger denn Ich und hieß der 4te *Nicolaus*, (welcher ein Officirer unter der Schwedisch[en] Konigl. Armeen gewesen) der 5 *Michael*, d[er] 6 *Joachimus* (der allein hat mir hierher nach Reval noch 2 {S} lateinische Schreiben gesand, daß erste Ao [1]639, d[a]ß and[ere] Ao [1]671.) Der 7. *Adamus* (welcher nur 7 Wochen alt worden) der 8te *Georgius* (welcher noch vielleicht im Leben)[.] Eine einzige Schwester hab ich nur gehabt, dero Name Emmerant[en], die war 1 ½ Jahr elter denn Ich.³ (Gallus 7r)

³ My own brothers were as follows: the first was *Bartholomaeus* (who was the first child of my deceased parents; he died on 1st March 1620, when he was 21 years old [...]). The following ones were all younger than I; and the 4th child was called *Nicolaus* (who was

The descriptions of certain events and incidents are quite elaborate. For example, the argument between the municipal council and Gallus because of his unpaid salary has been accurately documented. Likewise, some incidents during the conflict between Gallus and Heinrich Vulpius (the Rector of the Gymnasium) arising from Gallus' obligation to share his benefits with the other professors have been depicted very thoroughly, in the style of a diary:

Des folgenden 13. Maij kamen abermahl vorgemeldte H.n (ohn Otto Uxkel) umb 9 Uhr schon, zusammen, und ward die Sache zimlich hart disputiret. Der H. Rector wol[[]te sich keinesweges zu der abgeredeten und verschriebenen *distribution* {nichts} verstehen; [...] Darauff trat ein Theil ab, das ander widermal ein; welches offt geschah, Ich aber mußte mit den H.n *Professoren* nicht mehr eintreten, sondern mußte dieselbe Zeit über draußen horchen.⁴ (Gallus 9r)

The first chapter which comments on Gallus' ancestry and his working life is the most extensive part of *Anotationes*. The other chapters are by contrast relatively short. We can claim here that Gallus' *Anotationes* is composed of various entries and a series of accounts, each depicting a specific event or a stage of life. However, all these accounts appear as rather separate units, which are loosely interconnected with regard to the content. As Adam Smyth notes, the early modern culture was "a culture of the notebook", in which "each kind of record deploys its own conventions and mediates, in different ways, the information it records" (Smyth 2010: 58). Indeed, *Anotationes* presents the key segments of David Gallus' life as distinct sections. Each of them has its own structure and important information, which is emphasized in several ways: by listing the essential facts, by adding background information or by giving detailed descriptions of the critical moments of his life.

As mentioned above, a man's duties and social roles shaped his life in the early modern period. With reference to Gallus' *Anotationes*, we should ask

an officer in the army of the Swedish king), the 5th *Michael*, the 6th *Joachimus* (he was the only one to write to me, he sent two letters, written in Latin, to Reval, the first in [1]639, the second in [1]671). The 7th was *Adamus* (who lived only 7 weeks), the 8th *Georgius* (who may still be alive) [. . .] I had only one sister, called Emmerante, who was 1½ years older than I.

⁴ On the 13th of May [1639] at 9 o'clock the above mentioned gentlemen (except Otto Uxkel) gathered [...] together once again, and the issue was discussed quite seriously. Mr. Rector, however, did not want to adhere to the previously agreed and prescribed distribution [of money]. [...] Thereafter, some left, others arrived, which happened many times. I was not permitted to enter with the professors, but had to wait and listen outside.

if the author of this text acts as a representative of a certain social role or a social stratum or if there are any (textual) signs allowing to recognize personal opinion. In addition, it should be clarified what kind of society Gallus lived in.

In simplified terms, we can assert that Gallus' *Anotationes* pose an interesting example of the so-called "urban discourse" (Parker 2000: 233) of the early modern age.

Helen Fulton contends that from the 14th century, in the course of rapid urbanization of society, "the emergence of characters and identities whose histories are located in an urban commercial context" can be discerned in both vernacular and Latin texts (Fulton 2006: 200). The writers identified themselves "with the city and its commercial products" and also "addressed their work increasingly to urban audiences" (ib.). This leads, according to Fulton, to the re-definition of a writer's identity in an urban context and, consequently, to the construction of an autobiography that writes the self in terms of the city (ib. 201). Although Fulton's observations pertain to the city of London, her conclusions can be broadly generalized across the different urban settings in Europe in the corresponding period of time. So, Gallus' text also seems to be preoccupied with the rituals of urban life seen from the perspective of a man of letters.

In this context, the subject of commodification should be discussed. As Fulton states, in an economy "in which an unregulated market was beginning to have a significant impact on an older system of inherited landownership, the language of commodification was being naturalized in every area of life" (ib. 202). The interest in consumer goods could have been as much social as personal, since domestic commodities were a crucial marker of status in a society (ib.). In *Anotationes*, when describing his second marriage, Gallus focuses on the material side of his matrimony; for example, he describes in great detail the variety of household items he and Anna had accumulated (Gallus 27r). Another example would be the emotional account of the argument between Gallus and his first mother-in-law, Mrs. Burmann. It seems that after the death of his first wife Gallus was obliged to divide her belongings between himself and his mother-in-law. This process must have been very stressful, and Gallus frankly expresses his embitterment over the unfair division (from his point of view, of course):

Ich hatte mir zwar gewisse Hoffnung gemacht, Ich würde von meinem geringen *Suppellectiti* od[er] Eigenthumb entweder nichts oder auch ia gar wenig dorffen außgeben, Aldaweil gegen einem und dem and[er]n meine Schwieger=Mutter sich hatte verlauten laßen und solche Zusage gethan; [...] Aber solche Hoffnung hat mich sehr betrog[en], denn die Theilung hat müßen in allen gleich

geschehen, ist auch in etlichem fast noch über die Helffte auff ihrer Seiten aus geschlagen.⁵ (Gallus 21r)

Gallus also describes how he bought a house near Oleviste church and how he obtained the means for the transaction (Gallus 33r). He even includes several charts, which document his expenses for the renovation and the maintenance of the house (Gallus 33v-37r). Some short chapters of *Anotationes* refer to Gallus' efforts to improve his financial situation. For instance, in 1643 Gallus received a license to brew beer (Gallus 26v); some years later he even purchased some equipment for this endeavor (Gallus 37r). However, the text does not reveal whether Gallus succeeded as brewer or not.

Another area of the discourse of urbanization is the construction of personality as the subject of bureaucracy. Red tape and paperwork relating to administration, municipal regulations, guilds and local courts could make a crucial impact on a person's life (Fulton 2006: 204). This also becomes explicit in *Anotationes*. For instance, the first part of the manuscript where Gallus describes his struggle for his salary includes several transcriptions of his numerous letters of request to the municipal council and the district administration. These letters which were composed very carefully and systematically demonstrate how powerful the bureaucratic inertia had become in this period of time. For example, in the letter to the municipal council written on 5th March 1641 on the matter of distributing his additional earnings, Gallus puts forward six reasons why he should receive more money than the other professors (Gallus 12r). However, this letter (as well as many others) remained without response:

Ich hab auch nicht ein einiges Wörtlein zum Bescheid darauff bekommen. Mußt mich derhalben der Gedult ergeben, und Gott dem gerechten Richter alles Unrechts, auch diese Sache befehlen.⁶ (ib.)

Another good example of the conflict between a person and the bureaucratic machinery is the description of an episode from the autumn of 1642. As related by Gallus, the district administration refused to pay its half of the cantor's

⁵ I had a certain hope that I can keep all my scanty belongings or most of them at the very least, because my mother-in-law had mentioned it to some persons and made such a promise in the past. [...] But I had to abandon this hope, since she took more than half of all the things, although we both should have received the same amount.

⁶ As usual, I did not receive even one word in response to this letter. So I had to submit myself to patience and entrust this matter to God, the fair judge of all injustice.

salary (50 thaler), on the absurd grounds that Gallus had not been duly appointed. (ib.) Some time later the misplaced notebook containing a proper entry of his appointment was found (Gallus 15r). However, it seems that Gallus fell victim to a conflict between the municipal council and the district administration:

Wolten alß die Landräthe die 50 Rthlr von sich ab, und auff die Stadt schieben, wie klärlich darauß zu merken war, weil sie sonst fast nicht wußten, was sie der Stadt, mit welcher sie aber umb die Zeit (od[er] kurtz vorher) in Uneinigkeit gerathen wahren zu wider thun solten und kön[nen].⁷ (Gallus 12r)

The discourse of status is another aspect of urban subjectivity, incited by the rise of the urban gentry, especially the merchant class (Fulton 2006: 209). According to Heidi Heinmaa, a cantor mostly held a very clearly defined position in the social hierarchy of a Lutheran city in the 16th or 17th century. In the hierarchy of town musicians, the cantor came next after the court conductor (Heinmaa 1999: 18). It needs to be mentioned, however, that Heinmaa's remarks generally relate to the Lutheran cities in Germany (e.g. Leipzig). In Tallinn, the situation seems to have been different. In the parish records of Oleviste Church, the cantor is listed in the ninth position among his fellow professors and teachers, after the Rector, the professors of theology, rhetorics, poetry, Greek, and law and mathematics, the teacher of Russian and the *collega* (a senior teacher of basic subjects and music). At a lower position than the cantor, only the teacher of arithmetics was listed. (TLA 236.1.32, 1754–1833) When reading the *Anotationes*, it seems on the one hand that Gallus is fully aware of the importance of the post of cantor, and he also expresses his expectations in this regard. On the other hand, he seems to understand the limitations of being the cantor of the Gymnasium as well as his position in the social hierarchy of the city of Tallinn.

In this context it is interesting to read Gallus' letters of request as well as his descriptions of the state of affairs at the Gymnasium. It seems that Gallus always did his work properly and in conformity with the rules; this, however, turned out to be very stressful. For example, one of his duties was to provide musical arrangements for wedding ceremonies and funerals; unfortunately he did not receive any kind of help with this assignment. The professors of the Gymnasium were actually obliged to assist the cantor at the music lessons in supervising the

⁷ They refused to pay the 50 thaler and wanted this sum to be paid by the town. It was clear that the district executives were trying to get even with the town, because there was an ongoing disagreement between them.

pupils – which they did not do. Moreover, Gallus often had to spend his spare time copying the scores and giving extra lessons for which he received no pay. One of the concerns, which Gallus was permanently preoccupied with, was his music library. According to Gallus, when some of his scores or music books got lost, he had to buy new ones for his own money, without reimbursement. At this point, perhaps a general discussion about the social status of the cantor would be necessary: it seems that in the case of Tallinn there was a huge gap between the expected social ranking and the reality.

To sum up, Gallus' *Anotationes* gives us an overview of his personal life, and concurrently an overview of the general situation in the Tallinn Gymnasium and the city of Tallinn in the middle of the 17th century. This knowledge is very valuable, even though it is presented from a deeply personal perspective. In this paper, however, I have tried to view an ego-document written in Tallinn in the 17th century within a broader, international context. We have seen that certain discourses in autobiographical writings from Western Europe are present in Gallus' text as well, especially with regard to the structure and manner of descriptions. Gallus prefers to depict the relationships in the social groups to which he belongs (like the staff of the Gymnasium) or to analyze certain events or incidents (for example the argument between himself and his mother-in-law). However, Gallus seems to be quite straightforward about his feelings and opinions. He always remains polite to his employer and the authorities but he writes honestly about the difficulties in his work, when he feels unjustly treated in terms of his remuneration and his financial situation as a whole.

Aigi Heero

aheero@tlu.ee

Tallinna Ülikool

Narva mnt. 25

10120 Tallinn

EESTI

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