



The patriarchy can't dance with us': Statement, separatism and safety

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Abstract

The music festival Statement was initiated as a response to sexual violence towards women at other festivals, and during the work of creating a safe festival, separatism became a central strategy. In this paper we analyse media reporting from Statement, with a focus on the desire for safety. Using psychoanalytical discourse theory, we analyse different media materials, focusing on emotive language and fantasmatic narratives. We argue that in the media representations, a desire for safety is linked to enjoyment, opportunities to be oneself, predictability and lack of conflict. Safety is also strongly represented as linked to a focus on security and the absent man is continuously present in the media articulations. While the media representations tend to reconstruct a heterosexual Woman with a universal experience, the focus on the patriarchy, a common 'we' and the emotive language might nevertheless spur political mobilisation.

Keywords: separatism, safety, fantasy, psychoanalysis, desire, festival

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‘The patriarchy can’t dance with us’: Statement, separatism and safety

Is this how it feels to be truly safe?
(GP 2018a)

The above question was asked from the stage by the music artist Maxida Märäk in the summer of 2018 during the Statement Festival, a Swedish separatist music festival only welcoming women, non-binary and transgender people. The festival was a reaction to men’s violence and sexual harassment of women that has taken place at several other music festivals (statementfestival.se 2019). In the previous years, the number of reported rapes, attempted rapes and incidents of sexual harassment during music festivals in Sweden had increased and was receiving growing media attention. In the media, the Statement Festival was described as ‘a space for people to feel safe’ (SvD 2018b), whereas festival attendees mentioned ‘safety as a cornerstone of the happy atmosphere’ (SvD 2018b) and that it was almost ‘possible to touch the feeling of safety’ (Popmani 2018), in the sense that the feeling of safety almost became tangible. Safety¹ was a central aspect when planning the festival and a central feature when the festival was described by reporting media. The concept of safety [Swedish: trygghet] is widely used within the Swedish context often referring to an internal feeling or wellbeing, while security [Swedish: säkerhet] is more often used in relation to external measures such as alarms, guards, and fences. In this paper, by engaging with media reports and media material about the Statement festival, we will explore the emotions emerging in relation to safety, or more precisely a desire for safety, and how such a desire is mediated in a discourse on separatist safe spaces. The Statement festival was an attempt to achieve safety through separatism. Separatism as an explicit strategy is not very common in the Swedish feminist movement, except in the women’s shelter movement (Eduards 2002), largely due to the fact that the law against discrimination makes it extremely difficult to use it. Consequently, the festival was both reported and found guilty of being discriminatory towards men by the Equality Ombudsman (Knyckare 2019). The contemporary discourse on gender equality in Sweden is also imbued with a strong focus on men and the importance of involving men in the struggle for gender equality (Olsson and Lauri 2020). Such a focus tends to make separatism into a question of infringing upon the rights of the excluded rather than a sanctuary for the vulnerable. Furthermore, the discourse on safety is widely prevalent in a Swedish context (Rönblom, Linander, & Sandberg 2020). Safety is articulated as the solution to a range of different societal problems, and it is central to different policies in a number of social institutions, including schools, the police and civil society, as well as in feminist and LGBTQ activist organisations (Olsson & Rönblom 2020, Sager & Mulinari

2018). Filled with different meanings, the discourse on safety can be utilised in many ways. While safety is often used by racist parties and organisations to strengthen a racist agenda, it is also employed by anti-racist feminists to articulate a need for corporeal safety (Sager & Mulinari 2018). Migrant or racialised men can within a racist agenda be constructed as a threat to the safety of women. But also, feminist agendas and ideas on gender equality can be appropriated to argue for safety and against migration (Ibid.). From a discourse theory perspective, these different articulations of safety could be understood as a discursive struggle around who is supposed to be protected from whom, who is worthy of protection and who bears the responsibility for different safety issues.

It has been argued that a desire for safety is politically unproductive or runs the risk of reinforcing power relations (Hanhardt 2013) or that safe spaces seem to be mistaken for comforting and not challenging spaces (Arao & Clemens 2013). Instead of simply dismissing a desire for safety as politically unproductive, we will try to understand why this focus on safety arises and explore how different psychoanalytical concepts can inform such understanding. Building on the articulations of and reactions to the Statement festival in reporting media and a psychoanalytical understanding of desire, fantasies and enjoyment, the aim of this paper is to explore the grip of the discourse on safety and to analyse its political implications.

Text from the reporting media contributes to and creates the place where feminist debates take place. In other words, it contributes to our understanding of safety, of what is considered legitimate or what arguments seem convincing. This means that we are interested in media representations rather than the lived experiences of the festival. The media reporting from the Statement festival has both a social and symbolic significance through its mediation of emotions and affective experiences, emotions that are often recruited and converted into political terms. This is a mediation that is worth exploring from a psychoanalytical perspective because it helps us to untangle the emotions linked to safety. In the next section, we will present previous research in the field, followed by a description of the analytical framework and the material.

Separatism and safety

Gendered violence, sexual harassment and women's safety at music festivals have been researched from a variety of angles. Hill, Hesmondhalgh and Megson (2020) shows in their interview study that sexual violence at music events has a significant impact on women's musical participation. Barrière (2020) has through ethnographic research explored the idea of safe spaces at different Ladyfests and shows that despite the promoting of safe spaces patriarchal norms were still very

much present which brought about a dissonance between expectations on safety and the reality. Through a discourse analysis of safer space policies at punk music festival, Hill & Megson (2020) shows that such policies can be a tool for creating safety and inclusion but also that they tend to privilege the already privileged. Platt and Finkel (2020) argues that the festival context is often seen as spaces of rupture or as subversive spaces but are, according to the authors, spaces where dominant cultural and social norms also are reinforced and where both symbolic and physical gendered violence takes place. Similarly, Wadds, Fileborn & Tomsen (2022) writes that “outside norms” follows into the festival and that the idea of transgression of dominant norms at festivals provides a “cultural scaffolding” for sexual violence. In their interview study with victim-survivors, Fileborn, Wadds & Tomsen (2020), argues that there are specific contextual factors contributing to the underreporting of sexual violence at music festivals such as social norms at festivals, expectation of physical touch in densely crowds, consumption of alcohol and drugs, combined with alienating policing practices such as a focus on drug use.

The idea of safe spaces and separatism as feminist practices has been both embraced and criticised. The discourse on, and the strategy of, ‘safe spaces’ arose from an activist context during the 1960s and ‘70s. In feminist contexts, safe spaces have primarily been formulated as places for both safety and collective resistance (Kenney 2001). Safe spaces have also been described as places of equality and absence of discrimination. Thus, the safe space is centred on who is included, rather than the space itself. Feminist and LGBTQ groups have argued for the importance of safe spaces in order to keep marginalised groups free from violence and harassment (Kenney 2001), and the concept has also come to be used in pedagogical settings (The Roestone Collective 2014). However, Hanhardt (2013) criticises how the LGBTQ community made safety into a top priority, arguing that the promotion of safe spaces must be positioned in relation to a neoliberal society. In such a society, a neoliberal rhetoric of individual pain obscures the violent sources of social inequity and also contributes to shutting down discussion.

Another contested aspect of safe separatist spaces concerns issues of inclusion/exclusion (Browne 2009, The Roestone Collective 2014, Kenney 2001). Activist safe spaces are often based on separatism regulated by identity (compared to membership, for example), which creates feelings of belonging and community based on identity. The critique of separatism as a feminist practice is thus based on the fact that identity, as such, cannot be seen as one-dimensional or universal (see, for example, Crenshaw 1991). Building collectives based upon one identity will automatically exclude other identities. Butler (1993) describes such exclusion as a type of violence through exclusion. The Roestone Collective (2014) argues that safe separatist spaces are inherently paradoxical, reinforcing binaries of

inclusion/exclusion and safe/unsafe on the one hand, while renegotiating and revealing the porosity of these binaries on the other. Identity-based separatism has also been criticised based on universalism (Fox & Ore 2010). For example, women's separatism might reproduce ideas about a universal female experience of oppression that may exclude both trans women and non-binary people (Koyama 2006, Linander et al. 2019) as well as silencing how the female experience is also characterised by other power relations, such as racism and heteronormativity.

Trans women's inclusion/exclusion in women-only separatist spaces has been discussed for a long time and has recently gained new attention and interest. For example, festivals such as the Michigan Womyn's music festival and other spaces with a 'woman-born woman policy' have excluded trans women, a position that is often tied to radical feminism and sometimes to an essentialist understanding of gender (Browne 2009). Such policies have been analysed and discussed in detail from several perspectives, also highlighting divisions within the trans activist movement (Browne 2009, 2011, Koyama 2006, The Roestone Collective 2014). Eleftheriadis' (2015) ethnographic study about queer festivals illustrate how such spaces can be based on an anti-identitarian politics which opens up for construction of new identities that goes beyond strict gender and sexual identification. Other festivals such as the international "Ladyfest" scene has been separatist but trans inclusive, only excluding cis men (Barrière, 2020) and can be likened to the separatist strategy adopted by the Statement festival, which explicitly included trans people.²

Wahl & Holgersson (2021) argue that separatist methods are productive in organisational change management and equality work and list three components that they argue will enhance a successful outcome: Firstly, that separatism is used as a means to an end and not as a goal or an ideology; Secondly, that its focus is directed towards an organisational not an individual level; Thirdly, that separatism as a method includes a focus on power that facilitates collective empowerment between the participants. In other feminist areas, such as the women's shelter movement, in contrast, a separatist organisation is regarded as an ideological question (Eduards 2002, Enander et al. 2013).

Exploring the discourse of safety through desire and fantasy

To explore how the reporting media writes about and makes intelligible the concept of safety and the emotive aspects at play during the festival, we turn to political discourse theory, which is a psychoanalytical inspired discourse theory (Glynos & Howarth 2007). How safety is understood and experienced in a specific place is shaped by the discourses that provide a framework for how we can

interpret them. And conversely: how safety is performed in specific places shapes the norms and discourses of safety. Therefore, the hegemonic understanding of safety in part constitutes the subject and her actions. Political discourse theory has developed out of Laclau & Mouffe's (1985) work in order to capture the grip of discourses, and to explore the affective dimensions and understand the inertia of social norms and practices (Glynos 2011: 69). Psychoanalytical discourse theory adheres to some of Lacan's theories of desire and fantasy, and especially his theories of the subject. Psychoanalysis, as such, is a comprehensive theoretical field covering a range of different focuses, from clinical work to political theory. We are particularly interested in the media representations of the affective forces gripping the subjects to the discourse of safety. In line with Chang and Glynos (2011: 106, 109) we argue that political discourse theory focusing on psychoanalytical categories such as fantasy and enjoyment helps in pinpointing the political and ideological implications of emotive language in media and popular press. As such, this theoretical perspective helps in highlighting the political significance of texts about Statement in the reporting media. The Lacanian understanding of the subject is of a subject constituted by lack due to the insufficiency of language. In other words, no matter how hard we try, our language is never enough to describe our entire existence. Language builds upon exclusion, therefore it can never completely capture the subject's existence; some parts will always be cast aside, parts that do not fit into language. This failure generates a sense of lack, that something is missing, which gives rise to a feeling of lost enjoyment and pleasure (*jouissance*), in turn producing a desire for something that can bring back a sense of wholeness (Lacan 1977). In attempts to retrieve the lost enjoyment, the subject's desire is directed towards different objects, which are supposed to make it whole again. These could be anything from a new shirt to a political ideology – or, as in our case: safety. Since, from a Lacanian point of view, the subject is constituted by its lack, the desire is insatiable, and there is no essential wholeness to attain. The object of desire always gives rise to less fulfilment than expected and thus it escapes and changes when the subject reaches it (Lacan 1993). The moment we get that specific shirt, we realise that it cannot heal us, and thus our desire changes course. This constant desire for an object to fill the void brings about a "*symbiotic relation between subjectivity and the social world*" (Stavrakakis 2011: 69, italics in original). In other words, the subject cannot be separated from the social. Discourses are incomplete and open-ended (Laclau & Mouffe 1985) and, due to this contingency, neither can they offer the subject wholeness. Accordingly, not only is the subject incomplete and constituted by lack, but so is our understanding of the surrounding society. By understanding safety through the categories of desire and fantasy, we can explore the political implications of the discourse of safety.

In order to conceal the lack in both the subject and the discourses, and to sustain the promise of wholeness, fantasy plays a crucial role because it structures desire (Glynos 2011: 72). Historically, fantasy has been linked to the private and unconscious, but Lacanian discourse theorists emphasise both its relevance to political identities and its part in collective mobilisation. When it comes to Lacanian studies of the political, one ontological premise is to not prioritise agency over structure, or the individual over society. The individual affects society, as well as the surrounding society affecting the individual. Presupposing the subject as inseparable from the social makes it possible to theorise the entanglement between language and desire, as well as between subjectification and social fantasies (Healy 2010). Such an analysis can reveal how the social creates the subject and how the subject creates the social, as well as enabling a different understanding of resistance.

Fantasy, in our empirical material, is not something we analyse in terms of good or bad, or 'true' or 'false'. Instead, fantasy is used as an analytical point of entry to the structure of desire and enjoyment (Glynos 2011: 72). By focusing the analysis on the media representations of subject's attachment to a fantasy of safety, we can explore the political implications of the discourse of safety. This in turn can help us in understanding the ideological aspect of fantasy: what attracts the subject to this specific fantasy of safety? And its normative aspect: What ideal does a fantasy of safety support (Glynos 2011: 75)? One dimension of fantasy is that it works as a form of setting for desire, which makes the subject able to 'live as if'. This also makes visible the regulating character of fantasy (Scott 2011: 49–50).

To identify and capture fantasies in our empirical material, we focus on emotive language and fantasmatic narratives in the media representations from the Statement festival. This means that we search for two distinguishing features: that it offers rational grounds for the contradictory (Glynos & Howarth 2007: 147), and that it resists public disclosure, in other words, whether the narrative is questioned or taken for granted by the public (Ibid.; 2007: 148). To exemplify, at Statement, the media reported that the festival participants were admitted into an enclosed space where they were able to 'live as if' they were completely safe. Despite this, the festival had a strict focus on security, even though the threat – men – had been excluded, a contradiction that seemed to attract no public questioning.

As argued above, political discourse theory with a psychoanalytical approach may help approach the emotive language in the media reporting. As such, we have a dual interest here, to explore the grip of the discourse on safety and to probe the question of how psychoanalytical concepts can inform such exploration. On a clarifying note, we are using discourse theory together with some lacanian concepts to analyse the media representations of the Statement festival. Thus,

we are not interested in ‘what actually happened’ at the festival but instead how the festival was covered by reporting media and how the use of emotive and fantasmatic language, spurred the discourse of safety.

Material

The analysis consists of five different empirical materials: newspaper articles, a book about the festival, the festival’s homepage, a YouTube movie from the festival and the festival’s official Facebook page. The newspaper articles were identified using the media database *Retriever* and the keywords ‘Statement festival’, which rendered 933 hits [20 September 2020]. Since safety was a central theme of the festival, expressed by the main organiser Emma Knyckare as ‘the goal [was] to create a safe space’ (SvD 2018a), a delimited search was carried out using the keywords ‘Statement festival safety’, generating 30 hits. After reading this material the final selection of articles was based on the premise that the texts include descriptions and articulations of experiences of the festival. This final selection consisted of nine newspaper articles from four different sources.

The book *The Patriarchy can’t party with us: The story of the Statement festival* (Knyckare 2019) was written by the initiator of the festival and is both a book that describes the festival and its background, and simultaneously a sort of a handbook, as stated on the cover: ‘It is a fun and concrete handbook, filled with tips and ideas for changing the world through a cultural event. Achieving change requires courage, persistence, cohesion and pep. But it is possible!’ Over the course of its 177 pages, the book covers issues such as: Separatism, Free from men, Not all men, Crowdfunding, Sponsorship, Where to be, Voluntary work, Communication, and Security, to name just a few.

The website, statementfestival.se, is the official webpage of the festival, containing practical information about the festival such as how to buy tickets and so on, a media page, and reports from the festival (www.statementfestival.se 2019). It also has an extensive FAQ containing, for example, information on the background of the festival, who works at the festival, who is welcome and definitions of ‘trans person’ and ‘cis man’.

The YouTube movie, *Statement festival 2018 – After movie*, is a film made on the behalf of the festival organisers. It is 3 minutes and 55 seconds long, filmed during the days of the festival³ and accompanied by the song ‘(You should be) Careful’ performed by the artist Beatrice Eli. It shows attendees enjoying the festival, artists performing on stage, and people dancing, singing and cheering in front of the stage.

Finally, we have included posts from the festival’s official Facebook page.⁴ We have included posts, and comments on posts, uploaded *after* the festival in

order to capture emotions expressed in relation to the festival experience and the continuation of the festival. In order to ensure the Facebook commentators' confidentiality, we do not use direct quotes but instead describe the spirit of the quote in our own words (Markham & Buchanan 2012).

Reporting newspaper media as well as documenting media from the festival organisers is stemming from different levels. However, we argue that all of the included texts are part of forming the feminist debate on separatism and safety and as such contributes to the discourse of safety.

The analytical process started with us reading through the different materials, treating all material as text in a discursive sense, and marking all the places that articulate safety in some manner, paying special attention to the use of emotive language. After this first scan of the material, we searched for fantasmatic narratives adhering to our previously mentioned criteria. After thematising the above, the analysis rendered five themes: The necessity of separatism; Happiness, enjoyment and euphoria; The presence of the absent man; Community, exclusion and being the norm; and Statement and the political potential of safety. In the following we will use this structure to present our analysis. All the quotes are translated by us.

Analysis: The necessity of separatism

What if we arrange an awesome festival, where only non-men are welcomed, until ALL men learn how to behave? (Knyckare 2019: 18)

The above tweet from Swedish comedian Emma Knyckare was the birth of the Statement festival. This tweet attracted a huge amount of attention in social and traditional media, both positive and negative, and many women replied with a strong desire to participate in or arrange such a festival. Soon after the tweet, a project team was put together to make plans for the festival. Safety became the keyword of the festival and separatism the means to achieve that end.

The festival's point of departure was that: 'safety and security is not utopia, it's a matter of course' (statementfestival.se 2019). Separatism was rendered as a prerequisite for achieving safety:

It is not a feeling but a fact that separatist spaces are needed. Both as safety and as a means for power and organisation. (Knyckare 2019: 26).

The Statement festival can be understood as an attempt to create a safe space

through separatism, a strategy not only broadly adopted by the feminist movement but also previously used more specifically for music festivals (Browne 2009). Separatism is not distinguished by the organisers as ‘the solution to the problem of sexual violence’ (Knyckare 2019: 122), but as ‘a reaction to all the sexual violence that takes place’ (Ibid.: 122). On the one hand, separatism is described in the empirical material as a necessity for creating a safe space because unsafety is so clearly linked to the presence of men. On the other hand, security still remains the focus, even in this separatist space, because the arrangement of the festival ‘was founded on security’ (Knyckare 2019: 149). ‘Because it [the festival] was a reaction to unsafety, security was everything’ (Ibid.;; 149). When the organisers themselves describe the festival, safety is closely linked to security. Despite the exclusion of men, ‘there was no guarantee that there would be no abuse at Statement’ (Ibid.;; 149) and a rigorous security plan was set up, in consultation with a security company. This included strategies such as placing a fenced toilet block in a central location within the festival areas with an accompanying guard, allowing taxis to drive all the way to the entrance and special work with lighting. The YouTube movie from the festival begins by showing how attendees are body searched by guards before entering the festival area. In this presented rigorous focus on security, despite the eradication of the immediate threat, we discern a fantasmatic narrative of safety. A fantasmatic narrative can be discerned by its inconsistency and that it is taken for granted. The strong focus on security at the same time as the immediate threat (men) was out of the picture can be seen as a contradiction, which was not challenged by the public – thus taken for granted. In the media representation, other festival experiences were contrasted against the experience of Statement:

A feeling that anything could happen [at previous festivals]. ‘Be careful’, the grown-up said before we left. It was forgotten the second the festival bracelet adorned my wrist. Statement feels like my first festival ever. It evokes the same kind of joy as in the 14-year-old. The difference? ‘Anything’ cannot happen. (Gp 2018a)

In this way, the fantasmatic narrative of safety is based on predictability, the feeling that ‘anything’ cannot happen. At other festivals, however – ‘anything’ can happen (see Browne 2009).

Happiness, enjoyment and euphoria

In the media descriptions of the festival experiences, the use of emotive language is noticeable, and there are several examples of how the festival gave rise to euphoric

feelings closely linked to safety. In one quote from a visitor, the experience is articulated as: 'It was even more magical than I could have imagined, a feeling of safety and a sense of belonging, no shoving, it's fantastic' (SvD 2018b).

A fantasy must offer moments of partial fulfilment, otherwise it will be perceived as unattainable and eventually fade away (Stavrakakis 2011: 72). Feelings of enjoyment are central to sustaining a fantasy, however partial since by definition a fantasy is constituted by its lack and can never be fulfilled. From such a perspective, the media reports from the festival can be read as portraying a moment of partial enjoyment, thus energising and sustaining the fantasy of safety. One reporter described the atmosphere at the festival as:

She [her friend] describes the atmosphere as magical. Everyone is so extremely excited, she says. That's exactly how it is. Wherever one looks, friends are walking hand in hand laughing. /.../ I have never experienced so much happiness at a festival before, despite cold weather and heavy clouds hanging overhead. But we have our safety to celebrate, and it deserves all the jubilation in the world. (Aftonbladet 2018)

In other newspaper articles, the festival experiences are represented, both by reporters and in quotes from visitors, in terms of happiness, enjoyment, love and bubbling emotions, and Statement is described as a paradise. One reporter writes: 'The warmth and excitement that radiates from the queue towards the festival area can almost be touched and the feeling of safety – yes, it really is there' (Popmani 2018). Festival visitors write on the Facebook page that it was a wonderful and magical experience and that everyone was so nice. The YouTube movie shows people with big smiles, laughing and crying tears of joy. It shows one visitor being happy in front of the toilet block, visitors hugging each other, and smearing glitter onto their faces. All in all, the film portrays strong emotions of happiness, love and pleasure, reinforced by the recurring use of hand-hearts. In this way, the articulation on Statement, and by extension the discourse of safety, is bolstered with overwhelming, almost euphoric feelings.

Another reporter writes: 'After reporting from festivals for 15 years, I could portray everything from a feminist utopian pink shimmering perspective' (SvD 2018a). An article describes the artist Maxida Mäarak's speech from the stage, in which she expresses her experience of the festival as being like discovering a new colour (GP 2018), and the reporter implies that it is like being at a festival for the first time and describes the festival area as a 'parallel and kind reality' (GP 2018). Thus, the festival is articulated as radically different from other festival experiences and from the 'reality' outside the festival area. The enjoyment connected to a fantasy of safety is presented as a new feeling, a new way of seeing and a feeling

that had physically materialised – it could be touched. These are all feelings that, from a psychoanalytical point of view, add to the partial enjoyment and thus reinforce the force of the fantasy.

The presence of the absent men

The logic of the fantasy, in addition to a promise of wholeness, is based on the presence of ‘the Other’. The promise of fullness is sustained through the idea that it can be achieved if only the obstacle that stands in its way, the Other, is obviated (Glynos 2011). Following this line of thought, the promise of safety is sustained if the obstacle, here men, is removed. In one media representation of the Statement festival, a journalist describes this separatist venue as a place where the festival participants were ‘sisters, best friends’ (GP 2018a). In a venue without men and without the male gaze, festival-goers, reporting journalists and artists are described as experiencing a newly discovered freedom. In their articulations, it appears that the exclusion of men gave rise to a multitude of feelings of enjoyment.

What also emerges in the empirical material is that the excluded men, despite their physical absence, are constantly present in the articulations and media representations of the Statement Festival. In a quote from one festival visitor, we learn: ‘*We do not need men. They add nothing, we are going to have an incredibly nice time without them*’ (GP 2018b, our italics). In a quote from another visitor, we can read:

I had a completely different mind-set when I picked out my clothes, I didn’t have to think about whether it was too provocative or whether I could wear a skirt or not since it might blow up in the wind. I just wore what I feel pretty and cool in. (GP 2018b)

In the quotes above, the absence of men is somewhat present in wordings such as ‘had a completely different mind-set’ and ‘I didn’t have to think about’ or ‘without them’. This presence of the absent shows us how the fantasy of safety is constituted in relation to an absent Other. The empirical material also includes quotes from festival visitors saying that it was fantastic to ‘be able to move in a safe-zone *without* unwelcome hands on one’s body, unwelcome comments or behaviours’ (Popmani 2018, our italics), ‘we can just be here *without* being on guard, or afraid’ (GP 2018b, our italics), ‘*without* worrying about grabbing and shit’ (GP 2018b, our italics) and that ‘quarrels and threatening arguments *have been erased*’ (GP 2018a, our italics). The feelings representing safety are expressed, not as a form of safety as such, but as a negation of the absent. The festival experiences are repeatedly narrated in contrast to something else and, despite their exclusion, men are still

central in the articulations of Statement. This is clearly apparent in the festival's slogan: "The patriarchy *can't* dance with us" (GP 2018b).

Butler's (1990) work on the heterosexual matrix help us interpret the focus on the absent men, in the media material. From such a perspective, an intelligible gender, and thus the understanding of being human, is produced by the hegemonic and naturalised idea of heterosexual desire and its connection to both body and gender identity. Such an understanding of heterosexual desire is central to the experience of gender (Edenheim 2005). It is essential to Butler and, as mentioned above, to the Lacanian understanding of the subject that the subject is constituted in relation to the Other. Just as the subject's constitutive lack is covered by fantasies about wholeness, so the non-existence of the Other must not be 'disclosed to the subject since its whole existence rests on the subject not being the Other: if the Other does not exist, neither does the subject' (Edenheim 2005: 55, our translation). The absent man at Statement is thus not an absolute, pre-discursive entity to which the women react and relate, but he is central to the production of 'women' and the idea of 'femininity' in the media representations of Statement.

As Edenheim (2005) pointed out, and like the above analysis argues, what is excluded from the heterosexual matrix is present in its absent form. The exclusion of other possible desires, e.g. homosexual desire, means that what remains is perceived as present and universal – that is, heterosexual desire. In other words, the dominant position of heterosexuality conceals a homosexual desire, which may explain the lack of (sexual) desire in the articulations and media representations of Statement. Festival-goers are represented as feeling freer in choosing what to wear. They say that they can dance more freely and sing louder, which they link to an absence of the male gaze: 'Fewer looks are flirty, instead softer. Girls leave their beers unattended; they dance more freely and sing louder without the male gaze' (GP 2018). The Statement festival as a separatist space is thus described as constituting a desexualised space where the lack of the male gaze creates freer girls.

Edenheim (2005) argues that gender differences must be constantly reproduced in order not to threaten the basis of heterosexual desire. In the empirical material, this reproduction appears through the recurring reproduction of the stereotypical feminine: 'A smiling "excuse" and a soft pat on the shoulder' and in the empty bars 'the bartenders take time to hug' (SvD 2018), or how festival visitors have a softer gaze (GP 2018a) and 'smear glitter on their faces' (Popmani 2018). These behaviours are contrasted in the media representation of Statement against other festivals where, for example, 'the atmosphere is sexually charged'⁵ and where there are quarrels (GP 2018a).

The organisers of Statement repeatedly emphasised that the festival is for

‘women, non-binary and transgender people’, but the media representations still referred to it as the ‘man-free festival’ (Knyckare 2019: 28), and the attendees were described almost exclusively as women. In sum, a stable gendered dichotomy, men/women, as well as heterosexual desire, is naturalised and materialised through the separatist strategy and becomes both present in its absence and at the same time spatially eliminated. The feeling of safety, as expressed in the empirical material, thus rests on a stereotypical image of femininity and an idea of the total absence of (hetero)sexual desire.

Community, exclusion and being the norm

The constant presence of the absent men, in turn, creates feelings of belonging and community between the festival participants. This affinity is described in a quote from one visitor who used the following words:

It is as if a silent agreement has been reached between everyone at the festival to maximise the experience as much as possible. The strength of that community is unbeatable. (Popmani 2018)

One journalist described it as a ‘rarely seen community when men were excluded’ (SvD 2018a), and a ‘community that both opens up and unites’ (SvD 2018a). The media reports also include the performing artists in this community, and we can read that: ‘The most lasting impression of Statement will be how the attendees and the artists lift each other’ (Popmani 2018), or how the artist Jenny Wilson ‘is completely in symbiosis with the audience’ (Popmani 2018). In quotes from festival visitors, the words ‘magical’ and ‘fantastic’ are used when describing the festival and they often state that there was ‘a sense of safety and belonging’ (SvD 2018b), and that there was ‘a clear feeling of community’ (SvD 2018b). The feelings of belonging and community at Statement, described by the reporting media, can be understood as a product of the separatist space constituted by the festival. However, separatist places are usually regulated on the grounds of identity, often based on an understanding of identity as one-dimensional. A separatist collective built on the basis of one identity will automatically lead to the exclusion of other identities (Butler 1993). Browne (2009) argues that, while the affinitive aspects of separatist spaces need to be acknowledged, exclusionary practices call on us to continuously scrutinise power relations and controversies. What makes Statement different from examples like the Womyn-born Womyn festival that Browne analyses is the explicit inclusion of trans people at Statement. Even though we argue above that the identities of women and men are becoming

naturalised at Statement, the community and belonging are mainly represented in 'gender-neutral' terms, possibly revealing the porosity of separatist spaces (see Browne 2009, The Roestone Collective 2014).

A recurring argument in the empirical material is that safety is linked to the norm. The festival initiator, Emma Knyckare, describes her experience of the festival:

What happened was magical and incredibly sweet. For once, the female attendees were the norm. It was so safe, and people were super nice to each other. People held each other's bags in queues, everyone was let through, there was no scuffle. It was just pure love. A fucking paradise for two days. (Aftonbladet Klick 2018)

There are several examples in the empirical material of how safety is closely linked to 'being the norm' and, as shown above, it is also closely linked to concepts such as togetherness, friendship and love, but also aspects of being able to 'just be'. Safety and 'being the norm' are presented as making it possible for the festival-goers at Statement to be themselves:

The people here at Statement are allowed to be the norm. Someone came up to me last Friday and said: 'Is this how it feels to be a guy? I can just walk around here and be just the way I am.' (Emma Knyckare in SvD 2018b)

Edenheim (2020: 293) argues that 'invoking the right to be oneself entails a paradoxical reference to a universal self with particular traits'. The liberal urge and longing to be oneself is a self that is free of external repression, and only then can the 'true self' emerge, with a particular set of legitimate individual traits (Ibid.). An understanding built on the equating of the norm with being a man, as in our material, can arguably be seen as based on the included identity as mutually exclusive in relation to other identities, which leads to a division into 'us' and 'them'. Such a polarisation may reinforce the feeling of belonging, at the same time as risking reproducing ideas about a universal female experience of oppression and silencing how the female experience is also characterised by other power relations, such as racism and heteronormativity.

The represented feelings of togetherness and community can also be understood in light of the threat towards the festival from outside (see also Browne 2009). Knyckare (2019) describes how, right from her very first tweet, hatred and threats against the festival and its organisers flourished on social media. A clear threat from the outside can weld a group together, reinforcing feelings of

belonging within the group, and can work as a mobilising force towards a unifying solution (Chang & Glynos 2011). The absence of the Other, together with the threat from outside, seems to have amplified the feelings between the festival participants, creating feelings of community and togetherness. The discourse of safety was marked by feelings of belonging being actualised in advance, in ‘a silent agreement’ (Popmain 2018) before the visitors even came to the festival, a strong belief that “anything” cannot happen’ (Gp 2018), which also contributes to a feeling of predictability.

As mentioned earlier, the subject is partly constituted by her enjoyment, but this enjoyment is at the same time produced by what the Other, through his enjoyment, prevents us from enjoying (Chang & Glynos 2011). In our analysis, safety is both constituted by and materialised in the absence of the present Other. The fantasy of safety generates a feeling of enjoyment by holding the Other responsible for her lost enjoyment, as though the absent men have stolen the women’s rightful enjoyment (Ibid.). In this way, in the media representations, the presence of the absent men enhances the force of the fantasy, tightening its grip by holding the Other responsible for their predicament. As desire is structured through fantasy (Glynos 2011), so the desire for safety is structured through a fantasy that is partly based on the fact that unsafety as such is only linked to men, and partly where the imagined enjoyment of a separatist space is attributed to men stealing women’s enjoyment through their presence. Such an analysis is further strengthened by articulations such as ‘we non-men *deserve* to go to festivals without fear’ (Aftonbladet 2018, our italics) and ‘we have our safety to celebrate, and it *deserves* all the jubilation in the world’ (Aftonbladet 2018, our italics). Men become represented as the guarantor of women’s enjoyment through the idea of the Other who stands in the way of women’s enjoyment; that is, without the constant presence of absent men – there seems to be no enjoyment of separatist spaces.

Statement and the political potential of safety

On the one hand, as we draw on the empirical material, safety is represented to be the end goal, rather than becoming a tool for women, non-binary and transgender people to be able to enjoy the festival and the music. We can compare this with Kenney (2002), who argues that safe spaces were originally used as a means rather than an end. The organiser Emma Knyckare describes it as: ‘The very best thing was to make a space for people where they felt safe’ and that ‘the goal [was] to create a safe space’ (SvD 2018a). When safety is articulated as the end goal, rather than a means to an end, there is a risk that safety hinders further movement towards social change, and the more long-term political potential risks disappearing (see

Banet-Weiser 2018 for a similar argument).

On the other hand, the separatist strategy, and central power relationship (sexism and patriarchy) might be seen as holding subversive potential, unlike many other safety-creating practices, which Statement also utilised, such as increased lighting and more guards. As mentioned earlier, the separatist strategy spurred resistance from several different actors, and the festival was both reported and found guilty by the Equality Ombudsman. When something spurs resistance, it is very likely to be challenging the current order, which opens up opportunities for social change (Mouffe 2005). In this light, Statement can be read as both a reactive and a subversive force (see also Lelea & Voiculescu 2017).

While some journalists describe the experiences of the festival as ending with the end of the festival, others describe it as though the emotions remain: ‘The tram is full but runs through the good life. We get off in a squad, walk wide. The guys in the park do not know who to cat call’ (Reporter in GP 2018a). The world outside is described as ‘the good life’ but a hint of resistance can be read in the phrase ‘we get off in a squad, walk wide’. The festival is also described as changing its visitors at a deeper level and as being an exceptional experience; it is articulated as a ‘life-changing festival experience’ and, as Knyckare (2019: 120) puts it, that after the festival, they were ‘busy changing the world’. The Facebook page also communicates it as a ‘life-altering festival’. In the media, the significance of the festival is linked with a broader feminist struggle, by attendees, journalists and organisers alike. Emma Knyckare (2019: 114) describes it as: ‘It [Statement] has become a movement’. One article quotes a participant who claims that ‘It [the festival] is important for the entire women’s movement’ (GP 2018b), and yet another attendee is quoted as saying: ‘This is also a slap against the patriarchy. A rock-hard slap’ (GP 2018b). A reporter reflects after the festival that: ‘It is an opinion-forming eye-opener, a norm-breaking force and a hint of what a festival can be like in terms of safety and attitudes towards fellow human beings’ (SvD 2018a). In this way, the festival’s political potential is highlighted from a longer and broader perspective.

Concluding remarks

The first fantasmatic narrative in our empirical material addresses the need for separatism while maintaining a strong focus on security. Hence, safety is strongly linked to a focus on security. Although unsafety is clearly equated with men’s presence, and separatism is presented as a necessity for women’s safety, a strong focus on security was maintained in the festival’s separatist space in media representations of Statement. However, this contradiction seems to resist public scrutiny (Glynos & Howarth 2007).

The second fantasmatic narrative concerns the absent, but still, constantly present, men. Despite the exclusion of the threat (men), men are constantly present in the media representations of Statement. Safety is thus not something that simply exists, but something that is presented as constituted in relation to an absent Other. The desire for safety is constituted by, and the feelings of safety materialise through, the presence of the absent. Thus, men become represented as the guarantor of women's pleasure through the idea of the Other standing in their way (Glynos & Stavrakakis 2008), which exposes the contradiction: without (absent) men, there can be no enjoyment in separatist spaces.

The analysis shows that safety is linked with enjoyment and with the possibility to be oneself, which in its fantasmatic form is represented as producing a sense of community. The analysis also shows that a longing for safety is connected to its promises of predictability and lack of conflict. Safety is described as a completely new feeling, a new vision. The fantasy thus facilitates living 'as if' the fantasy was already achieved (Scott 2011), which is clearly articulated by the YouTube film ending with the text: 'Thank you for making this dream come true. We love you.' In this reading, Statement can be understood as a time and space where safety was lived and became something that physically materialised; it could be touched.

As Laclau (2005) argues, political mobilisation can only work over time if it is articulated in relation to a common enemy, if it produces affective emotions between the participants in a collective and if the media reporting succeeds in conveying and repeating those emotions. Thus, media reporting is central to understanding the world around us, but also normative in that it orients the reader towards a specific understanding of societal issues. Without strong emotions and a common 'we', political mobilisation is not likely to occur at all (Gunnarsson Payne 2013). Thus, the fantasy of safety and the enjoyment produced in relation to the absent (men), as well as the reporting medias repeating use of emotive language and affective emotions arguable aided the feminist mobilisation during and after Statement.

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Notes

¹ For example, *Trygg/trygghet* in Swedish. We use the word safety as a translation for *trygghet* while security is used for the Swedish word *säkerhet*. Safety is often used in relation to an internal feeling, while security is more often used in relation to external measures. The term 'unsafety' is used instead of 'lack of safety', as it is a more accurate translation of the Swedish 'otrygg'.

² Initially the organisers of Statement were criticised by trans activists for how they communicated who was welcome at the festival – that it was 'dude free'. After dialogues with trans activists, they decided to change how they communicated the target group – that it was free from cis men. Still, as the book describes, this was not taken up by the media, which continued to call it the 'man-free festival' (Knyckare, 2019).

³ <https://youtu.be/AohhWNZ8IIU>

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/statementfestival>

⁵ 'Raggig' in Swedish.