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Edited by

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Introduction: Feminist Cultural Studies

By Fanny Ambjörnsson & Hillevi Ganetz

There is no consensus as to how Cultural Studies is to be defined or delimited. It does not consist of one unified theory but must rather be regarded as an open field that is characteristically manifold. Since the field of Cultural Studies is so open and fluid it has taken varying forms in different parts of the world – Cultural Studies has been globalised. One sign is that a number of Cultural Studies conferences have taken place all over the world, including in Sweden, where the question of what Swedish Cultural Studies is and can be has been discussed.

Feminist perspectives are today well established and integrated in this field, and there is a considerable overlap and mutual interaction between Cultural Studies and Gender Studies. However, the question of what Feminist Cultural Studies is today has remained under-theorised, and there is also a growing need to collect and on a wide front present such work. This is not least the case in the Swedish and Nordic context, where such a broad collection of work in Feminist Cultural Studies has not been published for a long time. To remedy this deficiency we who are the editors of this theme section of *Culture Unbound* issued a call for papers for the European Cultural Studies conference arranged by ACSIS (the Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden) in 2011, with the following wording:

> Feminist cultural studies can be defined broadly as gender studies focusing on culture, be it in the anthropological sense of the concept or in the sense of culture as manifested in texts, historical or contemporary, or other cultural products. Like Cultural Studies in general, Feminist Cultural Studies focuses on the production of meaning, both in the practices of everyday life and in texts of different kinds. We welcome papers analysing gendered meaning production, in different texts and contexts. Papers where gender and other intersectional power relations meet are also welcomed.

The call resulted in a session with 19 papers and an idea to produce a theme section in *Culture Unbound*. All contributions published here are written by scholars who after the conference responded to our invitation to participate in a special theme section under the heading 'Feminist Cultural Studies'.

It has been an intellectual pleasure to edit this theme section, which offers an inspiring sample and overview over recent and current work in this important field. One of the things that struck us when reading the contributions is how central the interplay between text and context is, in all analyses, thus following a historical tradition that has characterised Cultural Studies since its start. Cultural Studies works with 'texts', including both lived experience and texts narrowly defined, namely, spoken and written words, images, music and style. The texts'

political, economic and social contexts are at the centre of Cultural Studies' analyses. Cultural Studies shares this interest in context with Gender Studies; it is hard for a gender scholar to stop at close textual analysis as well. It is not the text alone that is the focus of analysis but how society and text are interlinked, plaited together with one another. This is reflected in all contributions to this theme section where the social and political contexts are as important as the analysis of the texts.

This is evident for the first article of this theme section. Anna Lundberg's article is based on an ethnographic participation study of the production of a play staged at one of Sweden's most prominent playhouses for children's and youth theatre: Ung scen/öst. Within the familiar setting of the classroom, the play takes on the challenging task of questioning and scrutinising the complex and tangled situation of contemporary neoliberal ideas and practices, their connections to capitalism and their impact on everyday school-life. This in front of a very young audience who grow up during a period when neoliberal governance has gained increasing influence in Swedish culture and society. Anna Lundberg examines the ways in which the abstract contemporary economic-political manifestations of power and governance are expressed in this play for youth, and how this can be read from a feminist perspective.

Contemporary politics is also thematised in the next article, written within a Danish political context. When Helle Thorning-Schmidt in 2011 became the first female Prime Minister in Denmark, this 'victory for the women' was praised in highly celebratory tones in Danish newspapers. The celebration involved a paradoxical representation of gender as simultaneously irrelevant to politics and – when it comes to femininity – in need of management. Based on an analysis of the newspaper coverage of the elections, Kirsten Hvenegård-Lassen argues that highlighting gender (in)equality as either an important political issue or as something that conditions the possibilities of taking up a position as a politician can be interpreted as a performative speech act, i.e. an act that creates the trouble it names. However, ruling out gender equality as irrelevant was continually interrupted by comments on how Thorning-Schmidt and other female politicians perform gender in ways that fit or do not fit with 'doing politician'. These comments tended to concern the styling of bodies and behaviours and followed well known – or sticky – gendered scripts.

Departing from the well-known protest song *Hasta Siempre*, Tiina Rosenberg analyses politics and political investments from a slightly different angle. Rosenberg claims that all cultural representations in the form of songs, pictures, literature, theatre, film, television shows and other media are both deeply emotional and ideological. Feminist scholarship has over the past decade emphasised that affects and emotions are a foundation of human interaction. Furthermore, emotions are embedded as a cultural and social soundtrack of memories and minds. It is from this perspective that Rosenberg's article discusses the unexpected reappearance of the long forgotten song, *Hasta siempre,* as a part of her personal mu-

sical memory. The article develops into a personal reflection on the complex interaction between memory, affect and the genre of protest songs.

Musical discourses are also in focus in Kalle Berggren's intersectional analysis of rap lyrics. Intersectionality has become a highly influential concept in gender research over the last 25 years. In his article, Berggren highlights how debates have focused on differences and power asymmetries between women in terms of race, class, age, sexuality, ability and nation, but more seldom on men. Through analysing a sample of rap lyrics by male artists 1991-2011 Berggren shows how classed discourses can be described in terms of orientation and flow and how racialisation is articulated in terms of place – thus highlighting the role of normative notions of gender and sexuality in anti-racist discourses. He argues that this interconnectedness – class being related to race, which in turn is profoundly gendered – is neither well captured by the prevailing notion of 'masculinities' in gender studies on men, nor by the 'constitution' vs. 'addition' dichotomy in intersectionality debates. Instead, he suggests that *degrees of intersectionality* might be a more fruitful way of theorising intersectionality in relation to men.

Intersectional constructions of masculinity are also at stake in Claudia Lindén's article, focusing on the vampire as a literary figure and cultural icon, often used by women writers to problematise gender, sexuality and power. Departing from the *Twilight* series, Lindén highlights that masculinity is a rarely discussed topic in vampire studies. She argues that the main romantic character in *Twilight,* Edward Cullen, becomes interesting both as a vampire of our time and as a man. In a similar way as in the nineteenth century novel the terms of gender relationship are negotiated and like his namesake Edward Rochester, Edward Cullen has to change in important ways for the 'happy ending' to take place. The article offers an interpretation of Edward as part of a broader field of feminist (re-)uses of the vampire in modern literature with its roots in the literary tradition from Austen and the Brontë sisters as well as from classic Gothic fiction.

In her article Kristina Fjelkestam examines the en-gendering of cultural memory in Honoré de Balzac´s story *Adieu* (1830), which proceeds from a repressed trauma originating from historical events. Balzac wrote the story in the spring of 1830, at a time when the French discontent with the Restoration regime was soon to explode in the July Revolution. The story is considered to claim that the Restoration regime's repression of revolutionary history will have serious consequences in the present. But the question is how the *now* of the Restoration can best be linked to the *then* of the Revolution and the Empire? How can history be represented in a productive way, without silencing traumatic memories? Through relating to pertinent discussions in the interdisciplinary field of cultural memory studies, adding a feminist perspective, Fjelkestam suggests that the abyss between now and then has to be met with an ethically informed respect for difference.

Abortion rights are currently under attack in the Western world. In the US, different states adopt stricter abortion laws, but also in Europe, abortion is constantly

questioned. These issues are at stake in Helena Wahlström's analysis of John Irving's novel *The Cider House Rules,* published as early as 1985. Wahlström states that its discussion of abortion is more relevant than ever. She argues that twenty-first century criticisms of Irving's text, by feminist scholars as well as explicitly anti-feminist pro-life advocates, demonstrate the pervasive influence of anti-abortion discourses, since these readings of Irving's novel include, or reactively respond to, the fetal rights discourse and the 'awfulisation of abortion'. The article further proposes that the novel's representations of reproductive rights issues – abortion in particular – are still relevant today, and that critical readings of fictional and nonfictional representations of reproductive rights issues are central to feminist politics.

In her article, Helena Tolvhed argues for sport as a field of empirical investigation for Feminist Cultural Studies. Sport has, historically, served to legitimise and reinforce the gender dichotomy by making men 'masculine' through developing physical strength and endurance, while women generally have been excluded or directed towards activities fostering a 'feminine suppleness'. But the rigid gender boundaries have also made sport a field of transgressions. In spite of the so called 'corporeal turn' within social theory, sport is still rather neglected within cultural studies and feminist research. This, Tolvhed suggests, appears to be linked to a degradation, and fear, of the body and of the risk that women – once again – be reduced to biology and physical capacity. On the contrary, studies of sport might develop understandings of the processes through which embodied knowledge and subjectivity is produced, in ways that overcome the split between corporeality and discursive regimes and highlight relations between the body and gender.

Constructions of gendered bodies are also central in Magdalena Petersson McIntyre's article, which examines gender and cultural sense-making in relation to perfumes and their packaging. Through the use of go-along interviews with consumers in perfume stores, gendered meanings of seduction, choice, consumption and taste are brought to the fore. While the interviewees' ways of explaining their relationships with packaging on the surface seems to confirm cultural generalizations in relation to gender, Petersson McIntyre argues that letting oneself be seduced is no less active than seducing. Based on a combination of actor network theories and theories of gender performativity, the article points to the agency of packaging for constructions of gender, and understands the interviewees as equally animated by the flows of passion which guide their actions.

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"Will We be Tested on This?":
Schoolgirls, Neoliberalism and the Comic Grotesque
in Swedish Contemporary Youth Theatre

By Anna Lundberg

Abstract

This article is based on an ethnographic participation study of the production of a play called All about the ADHD and A+ Children of Noisy Village (Ännu mer om *alla vi ADHD- och MVG-barn i Bullerbyn*) staged at one of Sweden's most prominent playhouses for children's and youth theatre: ung scen/öst. Within the familiar setting of the classroom, the play takes on the challenging task of questioning and scrutinizing the complex and tangled situation of contemporary neoliberal ideas and practices, their connections to capitalism and their impact on everyday school-life. This in front of an audience consisting mainly of individuals who were not even born at the time when the political map was radically re-drawn in Berlin in 1989, and who have grown up during a period when neoliberal governance has gained increasing influence in Swedish culture and society. The play mediates its dense, political content and its descriptions of teenagers' everyday lives through a large portion of good old-fashioned entertainment, with music, singing and bizarre, laughter-provoking situations.

   The main research question to be answered in the article is: In what ways are the abstract contemporary economic-political manifestations of power and governance expressed in this good-humored play for youth, and how can this be read from a feminist perspective? Hence, the article circles around three nodes that intersect in various ways: theatre, economic-political issues and feminist perspectives. The theoretical framework of the article is primarily based on a merger between, on the one hand, feminist social science and, on the other, feminist cultural analysis.

Keywords: Theatre, children and youth, neoliberalism, feminist cultural analysis, education.

Introduction

> Picture this in your head: A solitary master's desk, preferably massive and dignified. Neat rows of pupils' desks and chairs facing it. To the left, and always to the left, at least if you take the pupils' perspective, a set of windows, letting in the light. This is probably one of the most predictable settings in the world, familiar to many of us, regardless of age or nationality. Most of us have been there, we have seen it depicted in films, in theatre plays and in art and, for the vast majority, it is a place permeated with distinct emotions and memories. Over the last century, this setting has been the epitome of a classroom.[1]

The classroom is also the place from which this article takes its starting-point. In spring 2011, I performed an ethnographic participation study of the production of a play called *All about the ADHD and A+ Children of Noisy Village (Ännu mer om alla vi ADHD- och MVG-barn i Bullerbyn)* staged at one of Sweden's most prominent playhouses for children's and youth theatre: ung scen/öst.[2] Over the last decade, ung scen/öst has gained both nationwide and international recognition for its innovative and challenging projects. The theatre is known for its bold performances and avant-garde scenic expressions, but also for its habit of radically addressing social and cultural issues in need of attentive treatment and careful analysis, issues to do with gender, sexuality, structures of power and knowledge, violence, racism, age, new media etc.

Using the emblematic setting of the classroom as its scenic point of departure, the play *All about the ADHD and A+ Children of Noisy Village* circles around the everyday life of a contemporary junior high school, its nitty-gritty details, its disciplinary techniques, its life-defining moments and grand catastrophes. Ergo, a play about school, set in a classroom, performed in front of an audience dominated by teenagers. Not a very bold or original idea, you might think. Quite mainstream, you might assume. And so did I. That is, until the first time I actually read the play and discovered that it took one of the most outspoken political standpoints I had encountered in stage art for years. The play is in fact so flamboyantly left-wing that Karl Marx himself gets to appear on stage, conveying messages about alienation and labor market inequalities. This hyperbolic political gesture is in fact characteristic of the whole play: Alongside various aspects of teenagers' everyday lives, lessons and leisure time, love-sick phone calls, fights with parents and teachers, issues like means of production, the increasingly important financial aspect of education, class gaps etc., are addressed. In particular, the play engages with the neoliberal ideas that – according to the play – govern the contemporary Swedish school system.[3] Hence, within the familiar setting of the classroom, this play takes on the challenging task of questioning and scrutinizing the complex and tangled situation of contemporary neoliberal ideas and practices, their connections to capitalism and their impact on everyday school-life. This in front of an audience consisting mainly of individuals who were not even born at the time when the political map was radically re-drawn in Berlin in 1989, and who have grown

up during a period when neoliberal governance has gained increasing influence in Swedish culture and society.

Taking all of this into account, one would expect this to be quite a heavy, if not to say depressing, piece of stage art, the kind of performance that makes a young audience despair and/or fall asleep. However, on the contrary, the play mediates its dense, political content and its descriptions of teenagers' everyday lives through a large portion of good old-fashioned entertainment, with music, singing and bizarre, laughter-provoking situations. The play is absurd, very funny, sometimes a farce with people dashing in and out of doors. Lacking a proper plot, the play rather builds up to a patchwork of scenes in which the aesthetic language is dominated by hyperbolic comic expressions and an interest in the material, fleshy aspect of life, in ridiculing authority and flirting with utopian ideas. In doing so, it alludes to the comic grotesque culture described by, amongst others, Mikhail Bakhtin (Bakhtin 1968). Consequently, most aspects and manifestations in the play are blown out of proportion. Everything becomes absurd, grotesquely exaggerated and laughter-provoking. It is through this aesthetic choice that I interpret the play, the performance and its enormous, larger-than-life version of left-wing politics.

Big economic-political issues, laughter-provoking entertainment and everyday adolescence, all presented to a teenage audience. To me, encountering this cross-over between genres entirely different from each other, the staging appeared to be a contemporary adaption of the theatrical estrangement seen in the Swedish Brecht-influenced children's theatre that flourished during the 1970s (Helander 1998), but also with relevance to contemporary feminist critical thinking (cf. Bryld and Lykke 2000). This is what I want to write about in this article.

Academic Writing and the Aesthetics of Stage Art

In recent years, Swedish feminist research/writing on politics has – in line with broader contemporary discussions – increasingly engaged critically with intersections between neoliberal economic-political discourse, culture and society (Fraser 2009; Larner 2000; Powers 2009; Brown 2003; Rönnblom 2011; Lundberg 2012; Wottle & Blomberg 2011). According to Wendy Larner, the term "neoliberalism" denotes "new forms of political-economic governance premised on the extension of market relationships" (Larner 2000: 5). Neoliberal governmentality implies, amongst other things, a focus on competition, a high degree of individualism, freedom of choice, control and money-focus (Larner 2000; Mouffe 2005; Rose 1999; Rönnblom 2011). I understand the stage work of ung scen/öst and the ongoing feminist critical writing on this subject as expressions of the same strand of political concern for contemporary power relations, but mediated through different genres. This article is to be read as a contribution to this body of discussion, bringing together feminist academic analysis and creative/scenic work on the sub-

ject. The main research question to be answered here is: In what ways are the abstract contemporary economic-political manifestations of power and governance expressed in this good-humored play for youth, and how can this be read from a feminist perspective? Hence, the article circles around three nodes that intersect in various ways: theatre, economic-political issues and feminist perspectives.

The analysis carried out in this article will not account for the play or the performance as a whole. Rather, the text is organized around three of the play's characters, named Apocalypse Lisa, A+ Kerstin and Ordinary Lena, and the ways in which they appear in the text and on stage. Hence, the analysis is based on both the script and the performance. Aged 14, the girls all work hard in order to handle the political situation they inhabit, but in three different ways. As their names indicate, and in line with the performances' general hyperbolic aesthetic, the characters are shaped in an excessively stereotypical fashion: we have here the rebel, the crammer and the plain girl. These are familiar figures, recognizable because they have been repeated again and again in the contemporary cultural imaginary of Western society (Dawson 1994). In the sharp contours of these girls, the abstract workings of overarching economic-political structures become tangible; they become open to scrutiny and description. Through the characters, it becomes possible to read the way in which these structures have an influence on everyday life, in minute detail. It becomes possible to unveil neoliberal governmentality as a contemporary, naturalized condition, or as Victor Sklovskij, the Russian literary scholar, would have put it, as an automatized part of everyday life, so taken for granted that it has become difficult to grasp or distinguish (1990).

Writing an academic text about stage art that, on the one hand, is comical, chaotic and grotesque, and, on the other hand, deals with crucial contemporary issues, is challenging. In any attempt to do justice to the playful language of ung scen/öst and its important political implications, the style of traditional academic writing becomes insufficient. Furthermore, writing about teenage girls and their everyday situations from the perspective of an adult woman (me, aged 43) also demands careful self-reflexivity and methodological curiosity (Söderberg & Frih 2010). As I have argued elsewhere, this kind of analytical work requires an interplay between a style of writing that "tunes in" to the material, in this case a comic, hyperbolic, political play for youth, and one that gives room for reflexive analytical distance (Lundberg 2008). In line with this, the article will alternate between longer descriptive sections, and an analytical style of writing. Altogether, I am inspired by Nira Yuval Davis' concept of rooting and shifting, a method that underscores the political importance of shifting positions but at the same time being well versed regarding one's own current position (Yuval-Davis 1997). Hence, I will shift between thick descriptions based on the play's hyperbolic language and the academic tradition to which I belong. I will also shift between my own position as a middle-aged academic feminist scholar and the positions of the three girls.

Since I have a background in broad feminist cultural studies, this text is designed somewhat differently from a feminist performance analysis, and it also uses theoretical points of departure that are somewhat different from the ones frequently used in feminist performance studies. The theoretical framework of this article is primarily based on a merger between, on the one hand, feminist social science and, on the other, feminist cultural analysis. It is my strong belief that these two academic fields, despite their long history of connection and co-operation, still need to be further interlinked. It is also my belief that complex, abstract economic-political structures and intersections of politics, culture, gender and sexuality are often best mediated and accessed through art. Hence, my aim is to persuade you as a reader to see through the eyes of Lisa, Kerstin and Lena, since they give voice to perspectives of great importance concerning our time.

Having said all this, it is high time for me to let the curtain rise and begin focusing on the girls, starting with the most impatient one.

Apocalypse Lisa: "Don't Disturb Me, I'm Hanging with Marx"

Lisa does not care much for school. If anything, she recognizes it as an institution with rules and regulations that beg to be transgressed. She despises the other girls, the teachers and her parents. She is also a passionate and highly attentive reader of the work of Karl Marx. Riotous and angry, radical and uncompromising, she moves through the play contesting the contemporary neoliberal world and all the ills she thinks it stands for: a fixation on money, possessions and status, greed and egotism, narrow-minded thinking and conduct in every possible domain. Her view of life is dark, and so is her grungy appearance and make-up. In scene after scene, she comes down like a ton of bricks on all the claustrophobic bourgeois ideals constructed by the generations preceding her: structures of heteronormativity, middle-class respectability and neat steadiness. In a telling scene, the teacher gives Lisa an assignment to collect facts and give an account of "children's situation in the historical past". She fulfills the task by preparing what she calls "a Marxist lehrstück", a morality play on the ills of capitalism, with giant banknotes and coins walking around with their human owners on a tight leash.[4] In yet another scene, Lisa sets up a meeting with a boy in her class who clearly adores her. They are supposed to rehearse Lisa's "Marxist lehrstück". At first, the feelings of infatuation seem to be mutual, but after a hesitant kiss, Lisa flinches, backing away from the boy, hissing that "love is a capitalist, patriarchal, compulsory-heterosexual construction", leaving the love-sick classmate in confusion and agony (Boonstra & Axelsson 2011: 71-72). Lisa's parents are worried by their daughter's peculiar and unromantic behavior, they try to educate her on the delicate script of teenage boy meets girl = love. But Lisa frankly declares that they need not bother, since she is probably not heterosexual, but instead maybe asexual, and

possibly in love with the middle-aged female school headteacher, Kristina (Boonstra & Axelsson 2011: 73).

Overall, Lisa is appalled by what she sees when looking at the contemporary societal order surrounding her. This order and its expectations of a 14-year-old girl's gender performance seems to be suffocating Lisa, and she fights furiously in order to fend off the anticipated apocalypse.

Shifting Marx

It is as though everything that Lisa says and does is mediated through a bullhorn; blown out of proportion and in your face, conveyed in the play through a sometimes surrealistic, dreamlike expression. This is, for example, what happens in the scene where Karl Marx is paying a visit in young Lisa's bedroom. Lisa is idling around, secretly smoking and reading aloud from *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* when the old philosopher suddenly climbs in through the window, dressed in a tight black body stocking, and with the better part of his face hidden behind the famous gigantic beard. With a strong German accent, Marx greets his young disciple:

> Karl Marx: Hello Lisa. I am so pleased to see that you are reading my book. I thought no one did these days. Especially not teenage girls.
>
> Lisa [astonished at the sight of her idol]: Karl Marx?! The real Karl Marx?! The founder of communism, and the author of my book!
>
> Karl Marx [With his hand elegantly placed on his hip]: Yes, that's me. [Leaning over Lisa's shoulder, peering at the book she is holding] Oh, this section I think is excellent… "External labor, labor in which man alienates himself, is a labor of self-sacrifice, of mortification…" (Axelsson & Boonstra 2011: 19)

Apocalypse Lisa and Karl Marx soon prove to be kindred spirits and the scene continues in responsive and joyful collaboration as Lisa and her bearded favorite start a discussion on the topic of capitalism past and present. Thus far, the play keeps to a reasonably familiar picture of Marx: the beard, the sharp brain, enemy of all forms of capitalism. But there is also something incongruous, increasingly physical and slightly voluptuous about the way in which Marx is walking around onstage. Matching the tight body stocking with a black bowler hat and soft black moccasins, performing grand dramatic gestures, high knee-lifts and rolling eyes, he alludes to Liza Minnelli's character Sally Bowles in *Cabaret*, or maybe to a queer Pierrot from *commedia de'llarte*, only with an exceedingly large beard. This bodily, materialistic representation of the old socialist is reinforced as the scene continues. For discussing alienation and capitalism with a teenaged girl is far from all Karl Marx gets to do onstage in this play. He is also, dressed in his obscure body stocking, given the opportunity to have sexual intercourse with Lisa's efficient, careerist mother in front of a perplexed Lisa. This of course happens for purely pedagogical reasons, when the mother suddenly dashes into the scene, in-

terrupting the political conference. She is filled with an urge to (once again) en-
lighten her daughter on the topic of (hetero)sexuality. Lisa is after all a young girl,
and so the liberated mother must do her duty and inform Lisa about the graphic
details of sexual practice. Lisa is reluctant; she clearly prefers to continue her ar-
gument on the workings of capitalism:

> The mother [dashing through the door, exclaiming in excitement]: You are a girl!
>
> Lisa [dogged]: The hell I am. Don't disturb me; I'm hanging with Marx (Boonstra &
> Axelsson 2011: 23).

But the mother does not give up so easily. She enters the room, immediately mak-
ing lewd eye contact with Marx, who happens to be the only male figure availa-
ble. In order to initiate her daughter into the secrets of erotica, the mother starts to
give a detailed account of the fundamental features of straight sex. Her presenta-
tion is richly illustrated by indecent gestures, demonstrations of lingerie, sex toys
and suitable body-language. After a long sequence of hip-wiggling and butt-
centered choreography (during which the teenage audience squirms with embar-
rassment and laughter), the mother finally turns her full attention to Marx, strad-
dling him with great determination. In contrast to Lisa, the old revolutionary
seems more than eager, although somewhat perplexed, to assist the mother in her
important mission of setting Lisa's mind straight. He does not seem to mind at all
switching from political discussion to a more physical kind of work, kindly volun-
teering as the mother mounts him. Lisa does everything she can to put an end to
her mother's activities, and the scene ends with Lisa escaping the awkward situa-
tion, shouting angrily at her mother: "None of this has helped me!" (Boonstra &
Axelsson 2011: 25). Karl Marx seems somewhat intimidated by the turmoil and
backpedals out through the window, back to the tranquility of political *thinking*,
away from the actions of unruly teenagers and their lecherous, hard-working
mothers.

I have inserted this longer description since I think the scene showing Karl
Marx's debut as side-kick sex educator is typical of *All about the ADHD and A+
Children of Noisy Village* and its take on economic-political issues. It is absurd,
grotesque, overblown and very funny, juxtaposing earnest discussion and recitals
from political writing with burlesque body language. In a manner characteristic of
the comic culture described by Bakhtin, the scenic language is rooted in grotesque
material realism and its intrusive, hyperbolic attention to bodily details. The scene
is saturated with comic incongruity (Knuuttila 1996), when Karl Marx and his
cultural and political analogies intersect with the emblematic situation of a parent
giving the "birds and bees lecture". What can be read into this clash between poli-
tics and sex education?

In my reading, the unorthodox portrait of Karl Marx must be understood
against the backdrop of the way in which Lisa is handling the expectations placed
upon her when it comes to performing young femininity in a neoliberal world. In

the contemporary cultural imaginary, teenage girls are not usually associated with devoted reading of critical work on capitalism. In popular culture, they are, still, more commonly associated with longings for heterosexual love and romance. Lisa refuses the expectations laid upon her and consequently the scene works as a twisted parody of a motif repeated in contemporary fiction: the romantic young girl's fantasy, where the handsome juvenile hero of her dreams climbs in through the window, into the girl's room, in order to make physical contact of sorts. In Lisa's case however, it is an old bearded man who shows up, talking about base and superstructure, wearing soft moccasins. Undoubtedly, physical contact is staged in the dreamlike scene, but the erotic agent in this scene is not the young girl herself, but instead her experienced and executive, hard-working mother. Given these circumstances, the scene diverges, to put it mildly, from normative ideas of how to conduct a young girl's femininity (cf. Österholm 2010). In this surrealistic and contradictory scene, the fundamental conditions of Lisa's life collide with her desire for the analytical tools offered by Marxism. Hence, the scene gives expression to the structures oppressing Lisa, as well as her furious fight to avoid them. And, as a consequence, both heterosexuality and traditional representations of political manifestations are displayed and altered at the same time. The scene may be interpreted in a wide range of ways: As a young, non-heterosexual woman, Lisa may be understood as vulnerable and powerless: even the private space of her own bedroom can be invaded by one of the "old, dead, white men", and the overpowering performance of heterosexuality. Interpreted in this way, Lisa seems to lack agency completely. However, this is after all Lisa's space, her girls-room and, the way I see it, the scene is intimately interwoven with her ridiculing attitude when facing the power-structures that are invading her. In my reading, Lisa is the mind behind the grotesque scene. Herein lies Lisa's agency.

Like a cicerone, Lisa personifies the hyperbolic political stance of the play, but it is also in relation to her that the established portrayal of left-wing politics is distorted into something quite unrecognizable. Lisa does not allow a traditional version of political thinking, attached to the heterosexual male subject and at the same time strangely detached from his embodied materiality, to stand unchallenged (cf. Backman 2003). In a comic grotesque feminist display of contemporary power structures, Lisa rearranges the traditional associations of the political field, replacing them with a situation where the Marxist doctrines are cross-fertilized with materiality in lewdness, soft moccasins and sexually active mothers. In pushing the heterosexual script away from herself, letting her careerist mother take the leading role, she aptly points out the intersections between sex, gender, body and labor (cf. Powers 2009). Let me explain how.

The scene harks back to the question of what Marxist theory has to offer a young girl in the 21st century. Lisa is drawn to the traditional Marxist ideals, trying to adapt them to the expectations laid upon her as a bearer of young femininity, and to the pressing demands of the contemporary labor market, personified by

her careerist mother. This is a labor market that expects her to express profession-al character traits, such as being flexible, adaptable, efficient, constantly network-ing, selling herself, becoming a walking CV available around the clock, using all her assets (be it her body or her mind). As Nina Powers aptly notes: "At this point in economic time, those character traits are remarkably feminine" (Powers 2009: 22). She continues: "From the boardroom to the strip-club, one must capitalize on one's assets at every moment, demonstrating that one is indeed a good worker, a motivated employee, and that nothing prevents your full immersion in the glorious world of work" (Powers 2009: 24). No wonder Lisa, with her Marxist-oriented mind, foresees an imminent apocalypse.

All in all, the comic grotesque aesthetic of the scene forces old Marxist ideas to encounter contemporary working conditions that have everything to do with body, feminization, sexuality, family and mothering. It underscores the feminist inter-pretation that the fields of resources and cultural representations, redistribution and recognition intersect and must be taken into account simultaneously. Accord-ing to Kathleen Rowe, the genres of laughter have a substantial effect on the way in which gender and sexuality are expressed (cf. Rowe 1995). Having experienced Lisa's bedroom-narrative about Marx, it is impossible for me to view him, or his economic-political ideas, in quite the same way as before. In order to be useful in Lisa's world, his ideas must be cross-fertilized with the complex living conditions of contemporary teenage girls. They must be plucked down from their over-arching, abstract position and rubbed against the fleshy materialism that makes up Lisa's world. Claiming this, Lisa stages an effective feminist gesture that stays in my mind.

Lisa and the Political

To conclude the matter of Apocalypse Lisa and her feminist, comic, hyperbolic and uncompromising version of socialism and neoliberalism: what did I learn from it? I would like to argue that Lisa performs a hyperbolic version of what Chantal Mouffe describes as being of vital importance to the politics of vibrant democracy. Mouffe's critique of the contemporary "post-political" take on eco-nomic-political issues is significant. She defines "the political" as constituted by an antagonistic dimension. She claims that the conflictual, agonistic aspect of pol-itics and the acknowledgement of conflicts of interest between various actors, groups and hegemonies are ineradicable and necessary in order to attain demo-cratic order. The public sphere needs to be envisaged as a sphere of contestation, where different political hegemonies are confronted. In addition to this, she ac-cuses the contemporary Western post-political systems of reducing politics to a set of technical moves of consensus and rationality, where antagonism is smoothed over and no differentiated alternatives are made clear to the citizens. The effects of the exclusion of individuals and groups, and the effects of power

struggles, are thereby covered up. According to Mouffe, democracy is not about consensus; it is not about finding the "right" solution. Democracy is a battlefield where different standpoints and agendas come up against each other, and as a battlefield it must be acknowledged, or else we might end up putting democracy itself at risk (Mouffe 2005, 2007). To acknowledge this is to acknowledge the political.

With Mouffe's definition as a benchmark, Lisa draws on the necessity of agonism when battling capitalism, this through her bullhorn manners that nicely match Mouffe's academic rhetoric. With no interest whatsoever in the idea of consensus or deliberation, Lisa takes Mouffe at her word and blows the idea of the agonistic out of all proportion, at the same time giving it a comic, hyperbolic twist, a twist that makes all the difference in the world. Hence, Lisa represents the antidote to the neoliberal system with its focus on rationality, calculation, management and market economic values. In line with the aesthetics of the comic grotesque, Lisa blurts it all out, without saving anything for later. Through her, contemporary conflicts become clear, and the lack of proper choices described by Mouffe seems claustrophobic to her. In the act of fighting the system that is imposed upon her, refusing the institutions of respectable femininity, heterosexuality, and capitalism (institutions that she is desperately seeking to overthrow) she is drawing on a long feminist tradition of confrontation and resistance (Davies 2000; Eduards 2002). In Lisa's position, I see a reminder of the feminist need to never give up on opposing, on attacking, on undermining the grossly inadequate global power hierarchies (cf. Sassen 1994). However, and as we shall see, confrontation is not the only feminist strategy at hand.

"Is this Song a Test?" A+ Kerstin and the Promise of Monsters

Throughout the various scenes of the play, A+ Kerstin seems to be on the verge of a nervous breakdown: When she raises her hand in class, delivering the right answer; when encountering her dopey music teacher, Johnny Thunder, who shockingly enough doesn't even have a proper teacher's training; when she is fighting to receive top grades (A+), and last but not least when she realizes that, in the school subject of music, the dopey not-even-a-proper-teacher Johnny Thunder will bestow upon her the second highest mark: A. The world is falling apart, since according to Kerstin A+ is the only acceptable result: it equals freedom of choice, and freedom of choice equals success. Everything apart from A+ means failure, and failure equals perdition in a world where competition is the basic rule.

As previously mentioned, the term neoliberalism denotes organizational practices, norms and speech inspired by the market economy and the economic rationality of private business, but now increasingly implemented in the public sector, such as education, research, care-giving and the field of culture and the fine arts (cf. Slaughter 1997; Rose 1999; Larner 2000; Mouffe 2005; Fraser 2009;

Rönnblom 2011a). In accordance with these practices, it has become increasingly important to be able to measure and account for outcomes and results according to given standards and criteria. Neoliberalism denotes competition, individual responsibility, freedom of choice, efficiency (financial and otherwise), accountability (financial and otherwise), management, rationality, results and outcome orientation. Accordingly, education becomes something that is put on the market, something that needs management, that is outcome oriented and needs to be accounted for and measured according to certain standards. Economic rationality has become one of the major driving forces behind every activity. Rose describes the way in which activities in the public sector, such as education, have to an increasingly large extent come under the influence of neoliberal governmentality and new public management: "obliged to organize their activities as if they were little businesses. Their activities were recorded in a new vocabulary of incomes, allocations, costs, savings, even profits" (Rose 1999: 155).

Neoliberal values have influenced the contemporary Swedish educational system in a similar way. Evaluation of results measured against a given standard has become the core issue in Swedish school politics. The Minister of Education has stated: "The new government is determined to change Swedish policy on education /---/. Learning targets and knowledge requirements will be clearly stated, with limited scope for interpretation. National tests will evaluate target achievement" (Björklund 2006, my translation). Another example of the influence of market economic thinking is the current government's new strategy for education, where entrepreneurship and the creation of new businesses are promoted as significant themes throughout the entire Swedish educational system (Skolverket 2012). This is in line with Mouffe's description of the way in which the welfare state has been "modernized" by the spread of management techniques promoting the key entrepreneurial values of efficiency, choice and selectivity (Mouffe 2005).

This is the order mirrored in *All about the ADHD and A+ Children of Noisy Village*. Time and again, the characters return to a discussion of the rules, expressions and expectations of neoliberal discourse and its effects on everyday life at school. The headteacher emphasizes the great importance of developing the school's trademark, since the school needs to attract students in order to establish a stable economy. She worries about the students who will fail to achieve the learning aims, not because she thinks knowledge is important to the students, but for financial reasons (Boonstra & Axelsson 2011: 30). Failing students equals a bad reputation, and a bad reputation equals less money, and less money equals a school with low standards. Aims, outcomes, national standards, competition, financial aspects, grades, targets, results, tests, evaluations, measuring, individual development plans: The words denoting control and measurable results fly through the play like nervous wasps. Education becomes a technicality, rather than a place where people might gain the opportunity to grow by learning important things. The system rests to a large extent on surveillance, rather than being

based on trust in the professional work carried out by teachers (cf. Rönnblom 2011).

Against the backdrop of such a system, school subjects that are not easily measured according to a coherent standard are problematic. This becomes obvious when A+ Kerstin has an animated debate over her grades with the dopey music teacher, Johnny Thunder. Kerstin works hard. She is competitive, strategic, goal-oriented, playing the game to win; she is everything the neoliberal school system wants her to be. Consequently, the question she keeps coming back to is: Will we be tested on this? She cannot understand why Johnny Thunder won't give her the anticipated A+. She has after all fulfilled all the criteria stated in order to get the desired grade. He, on the other hand, claims that it is impossible for Kerstin to receive A+ in the subject of music: He may be wishy-washy and totally useless in mathematics and other school subjects, but she on the other hand sings out of tune, and she is always out of step when playing an instrument. In short, says the teacher: Kerstin is not musical, at all:

> Kerstin [agitated, referring to the stated aims and criteria]: But I have performed singing and playing on an instrument, in a way that works in a group as well as solo! I have used music as a personal tool for expression in my own creative work, and I have taken aesthetic aspects into consideration! I have given examples of the various expressions and purposes of music, this from a historical as well as from a global perspective, relating them to each other!

> Johnny Thunder: [wearily, almost spluttering, placing his rubber-boot-clad feet on the teacher's desk]: Yeah, but Kerstin, this is not what it's all about. You do have an A, that's not bad eh, goddammit? Me, I think it sucks, this business with grading. Music is supposed to be fun, not a bloody competition! If you ask me, I would mark all the kids with A+, but that would drive the headteacher mad. I have to give grades according to certain criteria and crappy aims, but hey, that's not my decision!

> Kerstin [harshly]: But as the teacher your obligation is to tell me why I don't meet the criteria. You are obliged to tell me what I need to do in order to get A+. I think I meet the criteria stated for A+.

> Johnny Thunder [annoyingly inert]: Look here. You are dead competent, ambitious, fun to work with and all that. But when it comes to certain things, you simply have them in you, or you don't (Boonstra & Axelsson 2011: 33-34).

The teacher gets the final word; he leaves Kerstin as he joins the other, more musically talented students. Together they jam happily to the old rock song *Sweet Jane*, a song that, according to the teacher, is "dead simple", but at the same time "bloody brilliant". Kerstin is excluded from the joyful circuit of musical talent. Accompanied by Sweet Jane, she sits in the dark, bursting into tears over the injustice of the situation, over the fact that she cannot master the ambiguous world of music, where things can be "dead simple" and "bloody brilliant" at the same time.

Judith Butler talks in *Bodies that Matter* about "discursive limits" in order to pinpoint that which is possible or not possible to articulate within the frames of a certain discourse (Butler 1994). Johnny Thunder has most certainly reached the

limits of what it is possible to address within the realm of a school system where measurable results make up the bottom line. Music is supposed to be fun, he claims, but when he comes up against the criteria of grading, he gets lost, murmuring about "certain things" that one is either a bearer of, or not. The teacher leaves the student desperate and offended. Kerstin is holding on to the opinion that, according to the stated criteria, she has earned the top grade. Music is supposed to be fun, according to the teacher, but in the realm of contemporary school, fun needs to be measurable. Against the backdrop of the system applied, Kerstin is right: Since she has fulfilled all the criteria, she should be entitled to A+. The system is on her side. But this is music, and it is the dopey teacher who has the power to judge Kerstin's musical achievement. The situation goes askew when he exerts power, according to his own opaque logic. The "criteria" suddenly become irrelevant. The student is left on her own to handle the incongruities of the system that rules her world and determines her future.

"One becomes what one produces" says Apocalypse Lisa, inspired by her favorite socialist philosopher. The question is: What does one become when production is adjusted to the neoliberal model of education mirrored in the play? Wendy Brown claims that the influence of neoliberal technologies of governmentality spans from "… the soul of the citizen-subject to education policy to practice of empire" (2003 p. 7). In Brown's opinion, neoliberal thinking saturates all institutions and all social values. It has an effect on what we see as valuable, important and real. Neoliberal ideas have become a distinct part of cultural imaginaries, affecting everything, from the political agenda to the way in which identity-formation comes about (Dawson 1994). It has, as stated above, become a normalized part of everyday life, so taken for granted that it is difficult to recognize (cf. Sklovskij 1992; Bryld & Lykke 2000). To develop a trademark has become a perfectly self-explanatory aspect of human behavior. No one is to ask: "My trademark? I didn't know I was in possession of such a device" (cf. Lundberg 2012).

The discourse of neoliberal governmentality is seductive in the sense that it gives the impression that everything is under control. There is something reassuring in these systems of stringent rationality, check-ups, auditing and measuring. We can relax, the system is water-tight, equal and sensible. This is the system the teenage girl and crammer A+ Kerstin relies on. As long as she keeps to the system, fulfilling the requirements, she will gain access to the individual freedom of choice that comes with good evaluations, good grades and eventually a stable income based on hard work. But her safety and happiness also depend on the laws of competition and on her beating her classmates. Her success depends on others' failure. As the music teacher aptly states, the headteacher would not be happy with him if he were to give all the students A+. The neoliberal system does not work if there are no winners and losers, and A+ Kerstin is very well aware of this. Kerstin doesn't come across as a particularly pleasant person. Rather, she appears to be more than a little bit out of the box in her desperate effort to get A+ in every

school subject. Nevertheless, I tend to appreciate this neurotic, stiff-necked character quite a lot. Every ambitious schoolgirl can identify with her cramming, her anxious questions about results, just as every rebel can identify with Lisa's scornful attitude. Also, from a feminist perspective, Kerstin turns out to be interesting. I read her as a personification of the system being criticized in the play, but in a hyperbolic way and without any moderation. Her hysterical individualism, her fixation on measurable results, her endless nagging about grades and criteria, her grotesque ruthlessness and lack of empathy turn her into a monstrous representative of neoliberal identity. Those who have read Donna Haraway know that monsters are creatures to which it is worth paying attention. Haraway promotes monsters as promising signs of a different world, but at the same time as representations of the world for which we are all responsible (Haraway 1992). Kerstin engenders the contemporary neoliberal rules and regulations to the point of bursting. Catastrophe is waiting around the corner as Kerstin moves like a bulldozer in her pursuit of top grades, and I observe her actions with nervous anticipation: What will happen when she has pushed the neoliberal system to its limits? What will happen if all the citizens inhabiting neoliberal society master its rules as well as Kerstin has? Now that's a scary scenario to dwell upon. Meanwhile, monstrous Kerstin survives by balancing between mastery of the game and nervous breakdown.

Ordinary Lena: Invisibility as Feminist Strategy

Apolcalypse Lisa and A+ Kerstin both give voice to the often-articulated feminist desire for agency, impact and action; the desire to accomplish things, to make oneself heard. Ellen Mortensen ascribes the attraction of dynamics, activity, affirmation and progress a central position in contemporary feminist theory. Also, she points out critically that such focus on activity and action overlaps with hegemonic masculinity, which in a similar way is primarily constructed through decisiveness and the power of action (Mortensen 2002).

In spite of the fact that Lisa and Kerstin take up a lot more space and time than the third character, Ordinary Lena, it is Lena who might be the one to challenge contemporary neoliberal hegemony in the most radical way. Ordinary Lena does not get to say much. In fact, throughout the play, she has no lines at all. She is present in numerous scenes, she sometimes murmurs something inaudible, slips away, sliding down behind her desk to duck attention, to avoid getting looked at, avoid being forced to speak. Her girl stereotype echoes all the plain, nameless girls you have seen in the endless procession of high school films, often depicted as an insignificant member of the crowd against which the female leading character stands out. She also alludes to the invisible schoolgirl described by, among others, Anneli Nielsen (2010). Nielsen describes the schoolgirl's silence and invisibility as problematic from a feminist perspective. However, the quiet persona

of Ordinary Lena suggests alternative interpretations. Lena does not get to say one single word throughout the play, but this does not mean that her voice is unheard. When no one else is around, she sings to the audience and, through the lyrics, she opens up alternative readings of what it means to be one of the crowd, in the middle, unnoticed and unrecognized. The subject not recognized as extraordinary or distinguished in any way; not rebellious and extroverted like Lisa, nor a gifted student like Kerstin. Ordinary Lena is quiet, but in the lyrics she points out the way in which silence is often mistaken as being equivalent to weakness and insecurity. She describes the position she holds: anonymous, precarious, not singled out, not acknowledged. Against the background of Althusser's theory of the subject's need for interpellation in order to survive or even exist, Lena's position is truly an interesting take. The position she has chosen may be insecure, vague and anonymous, but it may also be a sign of strength and self-containment, a position where interpellation becomes less significant to the ontology of being a girl.

Silence is a cultural sign that is notably difficult to interpret; it often hides its meaning. A neoliberal societal structure builds to a large extent on situations where the citizens agree to recognize the various forms of interpellation and hailing; they need to agree to the conditions of individualism, competition, of developing a trademark, of being measured according to given standards based on competitive terms. In order for the system to work, institutions, as well as individuals, need to perform something measurable, something for the system to grasp, otherwise the interpellation will fail: "Look at me revolting against you!", says Apocalypse Lisa; "Look at my study progress!", says A+ Kerstin. But Ordinary Lena is silent. Something is lacking, a comprehensible persona to address, interpellate, relate to. In contrast to A+ Kerstin, she refuses to compete according to the standards laid down by the educational system, and nor does she, like Apocalypse Lisa, devote time and energy to attacking, and thereby simultaneously reinforcing, the significance of a system that she finds to be repulsive. This lack of interest and ducking of interpellation has an interesting impact on the paradigms that govern much of contemporary living. If you don't care about competing, then there will be no competitors, and hence no competition. If you don't pay attention to an oppressive discourse, because it has nothing to offer you, then eventually that discourse will fade away. Peggy Phelan talks of the unmarked, the immateriality that shows itself through disappearance: "I am speaking here of an active vanishing, a deliberate and conscious refusal to take the payoff of visibility" (1993: 19). This in a realm where sight is a fundamental aspect of subjectivity.

Paradoxically, the invisibility that Lena enacts enables her to choose her own path, outside the range of the external eye. This implies a different type of liberty from the freedom of choice that A+ Kerstin yearns for when chasing top grades. In contrast to contemporary feminism and its weakness for potential, agency and action, Ellen Mortensen highlights the silent, unarticulated and poetic aspects of language as an opening to freedom, to thinking differently. Rather than attempting

to control, estimate and measure, poetic language leaves space, makes a way out (Mortensen 2002).

In a wide range of ways, poetic language appears to be the very opposite of neoliberal discourse. Questions addressing the implications of passivity, of leaving out, are provocative, also from a feminist perspective: "[W]ho has time and patience in the age of technology to pursue such unproductive and seemingly redundant questions? Hurry we must, to complete our various projects. We are summoned to the beat of the machine, no longer able to hear the beating pulse of our own bodies" (Mortensen 2002: 118).

Ordinary Lena does not care. She turns her back on interpellation, walking away. By simply *not* responding when the disciplinary demand for articulate subject-status is laid upon her, she refuses to validate the current discourse. Against the background of Althusser's and Butler's writing, she thereby enacts the impossible, the act that is denied every existing subject (Butler 1997). Lena is turning her back, pottering with something other than identity-politics, something hidden. What is it? I am curious; there is something alluring and powerful in Lena's position, and I take it with me into my feminist thinking and activity. Consequently, Lena turns into an enigma, something not quite comprehensible. Her silence becomes a sign of a subject-status resting on different terms, not yet acknowledged, not yet articulated (cf. Irigaray 1985).

Theatrical Rage

When analyzing intersections in teenagers' subject-formation at school, the Danish scholar Dorthe Staunæs uses the concept *in sync*. Some of the teenage subjects are in sync with the established hegemonic order at school, and some are not, depending on aspects such as class, ethnicity, gender etc. (Staunæs 2003). Sara Ahmed highlights something similar in writing about the *comfort* of white bodies in a white world:

> To be orientated, or to be at home in the world, is also to feel a certain comfort: we might only notice comfort as an affect when we lose it, when we become uncomfortable. The word "comfort" suggests well-being and satisfaction, but it can also suggest an ease and easiness. /---/ To be comfortable is to be so at ease with one's environment that it is hard to distinguish where one's body ends and the world begins. One fits, and by fitting the surfaces of bodies disappear from view. (Ahmed 2007: 158)

To be comfortable in Ahmed's sense seems to be very pleasant. However, in my reading, none of the three characters in *All about the ADHD and A+ Children of Noisy Village* are anywhere near a comfortable position in the neoliberal system implemented at school, nor in sync with it. On the contrary, they are all fighting hard in order to survive. In this sense, the play captures a Zeitgeist, an experienced sense of discomfort related to contemporary neoliberal governmentality. To articulate this experience of a system that is at the same time both normalized and

uncomfortable is complicated. The play engages with and challenges the situation at hand, using hyperbolic expressions in order to achieve maximum Verfremdung-effect[5] and draw attention to the clarified and naturalized order of contemporary economic-political organization. Judith Butler uses the concept of "theatrical rage" to describe political anger expressed in dramatic forms in response to public inattention on the issue of AIDS. She takes her point of departure in hyperbolic aesthetic expressions and asserts that the theatrical format is often inseparable from the political rage and frustration. She also distinguishes theatrical rage as an important forum for political activism (Butler 1993).

In my reading, the girls in *All about the ADHD and A+ Children of Noisy Village* stage a similar intersection between theatrical and political rage and weariness over a system that strongly reduces the content of citizenship. In her famous article from 2009 in *New Left Review*, Nancy Fraser poses the uncomfortable question of whether contemporary feminism, with its focus on identity and individual rights, and its lack of interest in global redistribution, has been following the dominant neoliberal structures of our time (Fraser 2009). Apocalypse Lisa, A+ Kerstin, and Ordinary Lena ask similar questions; however, raised from three very different positions, deeply rooted in the everyday-life conditions they have to adapt to. Apocalypse Lisa chose the path of revolting against the rules displayed for her, A+ Kerstin survives through mastery of those very same rules, while Ordinary Lena simply could not be bothered; she turned her back on them. These practical ways of handling the situation seem to me to be strategies not in sync with the system, nor with each other, but rather they are expressions of radical difference.

To me, the characters each display a particular take on the political situation they inhabit. They also point in different directions when it comes to feminist thinking. But first and foremost they collectively lead me to the conclusion that feminist theory, politics and pragmatism can best survive the current neoliberal discourse through pluralism and radical difference. Sylvia Walby writes that feminism today is as vibrant as ever, despite assertive declarations of its death. She also writes that the intensification of the neoliberal context is one of the most important challenges for contemporary feminism (Walby 2011). However, in a situation where the neoliberal frameworks have become self-evident, it might be difficult to envision alternatives. Even so, Lena, Lisa and Kerstin, and their staged clashes between hyperbolic comic expressions and current economic-political discourse demonstrate that various feminist strategies are at hand: you can always a) revolt, b) become a monster, or c) turn your back. Let's get started, shall we?

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Notes

[1]   This description is based on a presentation by stage designer Åsa Berglund Cowburn at the collating, where she described her work and the way in which she thought about the classroom as such.

[2]   This article is based on an action-oriented research project financed by the Swedish Arts Council during the spring of 2011, located in ung scen/öst. The play is written by Malin Axelsson and Andreas Boonstra and directed by Andreas Boonstra. The actors participating are: Pamela Cortés Bruna, Björn Elgerd, Sandra Hulth, Erik Stern, Sandra Stojiljkovic, and Andreas Strindér. The position I take in relation to the creative process that generated the staging of *All about the ADHD and A+ Children of Noisy Village* is one of a critical friend, where "critical" vouches for the researcher's reflexivity, transparency and independence, and the concept "friend" reflects a situation where the researcher is committed to the project and its ongoing process in a generative and responsive way (Spicer & Neil 2008).

[3]   The title of the play underscores a black sense of irony through its allusion to Astrid Lindgren's famous children's books written in the 1940s and 1950s about the happy, wholesome children of Noisy Village. The difference between the utopian, sunny situation described by Lindgren and the harsh, neoliberal reality of contemporary youth could not have been made more explicit.

[4]   A lehrstück is a dramatic format devised by playwright and theatre director Berthold Brecht, emphasizing the possibilities of learning through acting, playing roles, adopting positions. The purpose was to avoid the dividing line between actors and audience.

[5]   Verfremdung-effect is a technique developed by (amongst others) Berthold Brecht. The purpose is to "make things strange" to the theatre audience, to stop the audience from becoming immersed in the fictional reality of the stage, or becoming overly empathetic with the characters.

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Disturbing Femininity

By Kirsten Hvenegård-Lassen

Abstract

When Helle Thorning-Schmidt in 2011 became the first female Prime Minister in Denmark, this "victory for the women" was praised in highly celebratory tones in Danish newspapers. The celebration involved a paradoxical representation of gender as simultaneously irrelevant to politics and – when it comes to femininity – in need of management. Based on an analysis of the newspaper coverage of the election, I argue that highlighting gender (in)equality as either an important political issue or as something that conditions the possibilities of taking up a position as politician was evaluated as a performative speech act, i.e. an act that creates the trouble it names. Ruling out gender equality as relevant was, however, continually interrupted by comments on how Thorning-Schmidt and other female politicians perform gender in ways that fit or do not fit with "doing politician". These comments tended to concern the styling of bodies and behaviour and followed well known – or sticky – gendered scripts.

Keywords: Gender, gender equality, politics, performativity, performance, celebrity, Danish newspapers.

Introduction

> She will stand there, the woman who has survived more character assassinations than a cat has lives. 173 brilliant centimetres that after six years on high heels between win or disappear stepped out of the misrepresentation of her as candidate for a night and into Danish history as the one, who crowned 100 years of equality politics by becoming the first female Prime Minister in Denmark. (Hergel 2011)

This rather high flown eulogy appeared on the front page of the daily *Politiken* the day after the last general election in Denmark on the 15th of September 2011. Under the headline (in war types) "The first" the journalist Olav Hergel's portrait of the new PM, the Social Democrat Helle Thorning-Schmidt, took up most of the front page and page 4. The framing of the article is that "we" (the journalist and the readers or perhaps the nation) are waiting for Thorning-Schmidt's arrival to receive the applause of her fellow party members gathered to celebrate the victory on election night. The new PM is, Hergel repeatedly writes, "slender as a whippet, unbreakable as a silk thread" (ibid). While Hergel's article belongs to the decidedly enthusiastic end of the spectrum, there was an overall celebratory tone in many of the other papers as well. The usual accounts of the election specifics (votes, seats, and persons) and comments to the political situation were topped with articles on Thorning-Schmidt's firstness, her gender performance and occasionally also references to gender equality.

There was a "yes we can'ish" feel to the moment which was communicated by both the journalists and the experts consulted by them to comment this "victory for the women" as the headline of another article reads (Klingsey 2011). While I was also initially caught by the feel of the moment, this was quickly replaced by a more puzzled reaction to what I saw as a paradoxical representation of gender. Firstly, there was an overall agreement that gender had in no way been an issue in the election campaign, a fact that was generally applauded, since this would have been "vulgar" as one comment suggests (Libak 2011). And secondly, many articles contained stereotypical accounts of the femininity/politician-intersection; these were often preoccupied with the (potential) disturbances of femininity. This framing rests on an unmarked masculine toning of the normative figure of the politician, which has been recurrently observed in feminist studies of political institutions in a wide variety of national settings (cf. Puwar 2004; van Zoonen 2006; Crawford & Pini 2010; Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen 2012; Hammarlin & Jarlbro 2012). The modalities (justifications and hedges for instance) used to communicate these representations are, however, also more specifically tied to a Danish (and more generally Nordic) resistance to feminism, which seems to be claiming with progressive force that as a general political topic gender equality is not relevant anymore (Borchorst, Christensen & Siim 2002; Dahlerup 2011:81 pp).

Taking the coverage of Helle Thorning-Schmidt's election victory as my focus, I analyse the paradoxical signification of gender as simultaneously unimportant as

a political issue *and* something that – when it comes to femininity – requires management. The dismissal of gender is explored through an analysis of the use of the metaphor "the gender card". This metaphor seems to be a way of making gender obsolete without *directly* saying so, that is characteristic also of newspaper articles that do not use the metaphor. The question of disturbance and management is discussed through an analysis of what, according to the newspapers, the ingredients of a balanced performance (of politician and femininity) are, and how this notion of balance is established through specific discursive constructions of femininity. The analysis is theoretically framed through the conceptualization of gender as performatively installed in a foundational sense, and politics (or rather "doing politician") as a specific kind of public performance. Hence performativity and performance are employed in both a constitutive sense and in a sense where it relates to scripts that are drafted in a social domain at a specific point in time. Through the analysis I aim to contribute to an understanding of how gendered scripts are produced and reproduced in a self-declared "post-feminist" political context where gender equality is seen as already obtained and therefore outdated as a political issue.

Performing Politician – Theories and Context

In what follows, I present both the theoretical framework of the analysis, and research that I lean on in order to contextualize the study. The latter with, has been chosen in a continuing dialogue with the analysis of the newspaper articles; hence the contextualization presented is both based on the analysis and contributes to the framing of it.

I have constructed the study in a way that will help me discuss *some* questions related to gender and politics. Thus I for instance circumvent the theoretical question of how "the political" in a broader sense is constituted (including how feminist political philosophers have dealt with this question) by focusing on representations of femininity associated with a specific political institution, i.e. the parliament. I claim that actors included in this institution "do" politics, not that this institution define or empty out "the political". The study is conducted through an analysis of media-texts, but even if I also draw on feminist media studies to some extent, I do this rather selectively, since it is not primarily the media or the relation between media and politicians, I aim to discuss. Hence, I use the media-texts as a contemporary archive of representations of gender in parliamentary politics.

Performativity

Performance and performativity are key concepts in the theoretical framing of the analysis – both with respect to gender and to politics. Performativity in the constitutive sense refers to Judith Butler's conceptualization of gender. Following her, I

understand gender as inhabited and embodied (as sex) through performative reiterations of the binary divide between male and female – and the heterosexual matrix associated with this division (Butler 1990; 1993). Performativity is hence both "culture bound" and productive of culture (rather than "merely" representing culture). For Butler there is no performer prior to the performative act and in that sense the act is singular; but there is, on the other hand, a binding and enabling history of enactments. This is a history of specific delimitations, a history of institutional arrangements, and a history where gender is performed in concert with other universal (-ized) and situational categorical distinctions. In the institutional field of politics, "doing politician" is hence enabled and constrained by the available discourses regulating both what counts as political and how the position politician can be acquired. Gender is one distinction that intersects with politician in significant ways. Hence some bodies slide comfortably into this position, while other bodies need to compensate in order not to stand out too much. Nirmal Puwar (2004) evocatively refers to women and racialized minorities as "space invaders" in her interview based analysis of the British Parliament; and describes the relation between appropriate and inappropriate bodies as follows:

> The female body is an awkward and conspicuous form in relation to the (masculine) somatic norm. This is precisely why for women the political costume is (a): ill-fitting; and (b) unbecoming. A sedimented relationship between the masculine body and the body politic has developed. This historical link between specific sorts of social bodies and institutional positions is, though, at the same time a performative accomplishment that requires constant repetition in order to be reproduced […] Hence it is open to change and variation – usually, though, within limits. (Puwar 2004:78)

Butler's conceptualization, which is also referenced by Puwar, captures the way sex is retroactively constituted as ontologically (usually dressed as biologically) given, and productive of gender, as well as the potentially subversive gaps left open by the reliance on repetition. The gendered relations that delimit access as well as acting in parliamentary institutions are historically and culturally sedimented, and even if they are not immutable, they are not easily done away with.

Performance and Representation

In my theoretical framework, I use the concept of "performance" in order to zoom in on the specific set up of the political scene I am studying. While the actors in the parliament are always already gendered in a constitutive sense that can be captured through Butler's concept of performativity, they also perform on this stage in a self-conscious and self-reflexive way. Their acts are in addition received by a variety of audiences (the party, the voters, their electorate, the people, the media etc.) *as* amongst other things performances. This means that parliamentary politics can be conceptualized as performance in a "theatrical" sense, referring to the specifics of how the contemporary institutionalization of parliamentary politics is scripted. Based on this, I deliberately use metaphors associated with theatre (script

and stage for instance) in my discussion of the discourses governing parliamentary politics.

Representing ones electorate is not a straightforward matter that can be read off from a supposedly neutral ideal of politics and secured through the proper formal channels of election procedures. The link between representation and representativeness has been a focal point within feminist political science, where – among other things – the relation between numerical and substantial representation of women in politics has been debated. It has been suggested that women, once present in sufficient numbers, will act in the interest of (all) women or that women bring a voice of their own into politics since they represent different skills and values as well as a different knowledge than men (see Mackay 2004 for an overview of these debates). The political strategies built on these analyses are often referred to as identity politics or the politics of difference, and have been widely accused of treating social categories as essential and homogeneous entities (cf. Crenshaw 1991/2006; but see also Phillips 2010: 69; Ahmed 2012: 141). While – partly – agreeing with this critique, I adopt a different perspective towards representativeness through my focus on performance; hence I follow John Street's suggestion that "[…] the representative claim has to be analysed as a performance which reveals and establishes certain qualities and values." (Street 2004:447) This means that political representation is (at least partly) constructed through the culturally scripted performance of politicians. This aligns political representation with the cultural studies notion of representation as a signifying practice (Hall 1997). Liesbet van Zoonen, who – in contrast to Street – is also interested in how gender becomes involved in these performances, argues how the process of turning representativeness on its head works:

> […] I wish to focus on the different conceptualizations of "constituency" necessitated by the present disappearance of traditional electorates. Political parties and candidates now have to produce their constituencies on the basis of their appeal rather than relying on already existing social commonalities. (van Zoonen 2005:59)

This is not necessarily entirely new (something van Zoonen also points out; 2005:71), but leaving aside this question, both van Zoonen and Street are interested in how representativeness is obtained through the articulation of politics and popular culture – or what they call celebrity politics.

Taking her cue from John Corner (2003), van Zoonen argues that taking up the position politician sucessfully involves a performance on several stages: Firstly the stage of political institutions and processes, secondly the stage of private life, but thirdly also the stage of the public and the popular (notably TV), which "[presents] the qualities of the persona in the political field and the stage of private life […] in concert to a wider audience" (van Zoonen 2005:75). Proceeding from this, I will in the next paragraphs take a closer look at these three stages.

Pure Politics or "the Suit"

Estimating whether a politician – male or female – does the job appropriately, involve norms designating what proper politics amount to. In the media texts I analyse in this article, the norm is usually unmarked but never the less present through representations of actual or potential transgressions. Hence the norm itself is taken for granted and emerges not as a specified content but through its limits.

According to van Zoonen a modernist understanding of politics designates that:

> […] politics will absorb all communicative repertoires to its own benefit, but will hear and allow only one proper political mode of expressing public concerns and conflict, which is characterized by *informed judgment, impersonal reaction and rational debate*. (van Zoonen 2005: 16; emphasis added; see also Adcock 2010:138)

I argue that this understanding (which I call "pure politics") travel through the representations of femininity and politics in the newspaper articles as a regulatory discourse or script. As such it takes part in delimitating what counts as a proper performance of politician. In Signe Hedeboe's interview-based analysis of the Danish Parliament conducted as part of the state sponsored Danish Democracy and Power Study (1998–2004), pure politics is referred to through the metaphor "the suit". This metaphor is frequently used by her informants to summarize the politician's professional capacity as a communicator of political messages. According to the politicians, this style of communication contributes to a display of authority, which is a necessary ingredient in "performing politician" appropriately (Hedeboe 2002: 45). Hedeboe is not particularly interested in how the suit as a metaphor as well as the style and practices it summarizes is gendered. The association between the ideal of pure politics and hegemonic masculinity is, however, amply pointed out in feminist research into parliamentary politics and media representations of female politicians (cf. Puwar 2004; van Zoonen 2006; Crawford & Pini 2010; Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen 2012; Hammarlin & Jarlbro 2012). The metaphor manages – at the same time – to refer to pure politics and to the somatic norm associated with this ideal. Hence it points towards bodies and the embodied character of the position politician. Media reporting on female politicians is often (if not always, see Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen 2012) preoccupied with sartorial matters (cf. Ross & Sreberny-Mohammadi 1997; Adcock 2010; van Zoonen & Harmer 2011; Ross et al. 2013). While male politicians may also occasionally be portrayed in terms of their stylishness (or lack of it), the suit still folds comfortably around them as an inconspicuous piece of garment.

The Human Being Behind the Suit

The authority associated with mastering the scripts of pure politics is, however, not enough when it comes to performing politician appropriately. Signe Hedeboe points out, that while the suit may contribute to a display of authority, it also un-

dermines credibility and legitimacy; therefore, according to her informants, as a politician you need to "step out of the suit" and expose the human being behind it (Hedeboe 2002:45). As one of her female informants puts it: "It is not sufficient to be a talking suit on the TV screen" (Ibid).

Displaying the human being behind the suit is about establishing a position that (partly) breaks away from authority and underlines similarity: politicians are "just like us" – and this is why they can establish themselves as representative of "us". The demand to display one's "private self" is not in itself gendered, but the possibilities of doing so without compromising the necessary amount (and quality) of authority follows a clearly gendered pattern. van Zoonen notes that there is a current tendency for male politicians "to explicitly and publicly claim time-outs for their family" and this "contributes to their overall image of integrity, and adds a sense of them being modern men." (van Zoonen 2005: 91). This is, however not the case for female politicians, since they and their families are rather exposed as pitiable, especially by the celebrity press. Motherhood is one recurring theme appearing in the media coverage of female (especially top-) politicians. Iñaki Garcia-Blanco and Karin Wahl-Jorgensen (2012) for instance analyses the media coverage of the appointment of a majority female cabinet after the 2008 general election in Spain. Carme Chacón who was appointed minister of defence – and was in an advanced state of pregnancy when she was appointed – not surprisingly attracted a lot of media attention. The authors conclude that:

> In a lose-lose situation, Chacón was not only deemed unsuitable for being in charge of a ministry due to her gender and her pregnancy, but was also constructed as a questionable mother. (Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen 2012: 434).

Closer to home Mia-Marie Hammarlin and Gunilla Jarlbro point out the importance of motherhood in the representations of Mona Sahlin in the Swedish press following her (mis)use of an office credit card (in 1995) for private purchases. Sahlin could not, according to several commentators, be a mother of three *and* a minister – without being "sloppy" in both capacities (Hammarlin & Jarlbro 2012: 123 pp).

The Public and the Popular

As mentioned above, the third main stage politicians need to perform on is the media. TV plays a prominent role here, but in recent years social media (facebook, twitter etc.) are gaining importance as well. In the public and mediated performances of politicians, genres and scripts originating in popular culture intertwine with the suit and the human being behind the suit. Not all politicians acquire the status of celebrity politicians, but performing politician adequately is still partly associated with models of masculinity and femininity originating in celebrity culture. van Zoonen argues that celebrity culture is predominantly based on Hollywood scripts. For feminine bodies, this entails four main scripts: "femininity as

enigmatic and threatening, femininity as nurturing and caring, femininity as sexuality and femininity as bodily practice." (van Zoonen 2005:93).

Getting the mix between pure politics, private life and popular culture right or perhaps rather mixing in a coherent way is vital for a convincing performance, but the feminine celebrity scripts are not easily articulated with the necessary element of pure politics. van Zoonen argues that the ultimate aim of a good performance is building up authenticity, and as such it is vital that the performance is not detected as such (van Zoonen 2005: 75). However, as I have noted above, top politicians' self-presentations are constantly evaluated by the media and the electorate *as performances* (directed by spin doctors, personal assistants and what not), often judging whether "the play" or "the role" is a good choice or acted well.

Methodological Considerations

In this article, the media coverage in the days after the September 2011 election is for analytical purposes constructed as a cut or a crystalizing point, from where I follow selected leads in time and space. My own puzzlement is the point of departure for this construction – hence I am not claiming that this *is* a watershed event. I do argue, however, that the "firstness" of Thorning-Schmidt – the "yes we can" atmosphere – means that gender is foregrounded in an explicit manner that is rarely the case in media reporting on parliamentary politics in Denmark. My analysis below concentrates on how Thorning-Schmidt's performance as top politician is *received, evaluated and communicated* to a wider audience by the Danish newspapers. Hence I address how the media represent Thorning-Schmidt's gendered performance, and not directly how she navigates in the political space.

Initially, I did a complete reading of the coverage of the 15th of September election on the 16th and 17th of September in all (15) newspapers (dailies or weeklies) with a national circulation. Zooming in on the articles that dealt with gender (26 articles), my analysis focused on the discursive constructions of gender in these articles – including the linguistic modalities used to communicate these constructions. I would undoubtedly have found gendered constructions in the articles that did not explicitly deal with gender, but since I was interested in how gender is represented when explicitly mentioned, I did not go into these articles. The analysis of the balanced performance of gender is based on these 26 articles.

The 15 newspapers in national circulation cover a variety of political orientations and include tabloids as well as broadsheets. Although the two tabloids (*BT* and *Ekstra Bladet*) in the sample also comment on gender, most of the substantial articles appear in the broadsheets, something which is also reflected in my analysis. The articles in my sample belong to different genres. Only a few of them are straight forward news articles, framed and written by journalists. On the contrary, the articles to a large degree consist of interviews, articles mainly based on expert comments, and comments that are not written by journalists. Even if all

news coverage amounts to analysis (i.e. based on a framing, a choice of what to in- or exclude etc.), it differs if articles *are presented* as analyses or not. Most of the articles in the sample are partly or predominantly presented as analyses, and this means that I analyse analyses made by others, including – as will be seen – gender researchers, authors, politicians, and spin doctors. This is interesting, since it means that the journalists in this way establish a distance to issues of gender: they deal with it through quoting others. Besides this, I do, however, not distinguish between different genres in my analysis; I mainly use the newspaper coverage as a contemporary archive of discourses on gender and (parliamentary) politics.

One initial finding in the first phase of analysis was the centrality of the gender card metaphor as a way of diffusing gender as politically important. This both led me back to elaborate on the idea of pure politics theoretically and contextually and it led me to pursue the metaphor itself. Hence, I both searched globally for research articles, and locally (in Denmark) for media uses (in the Infomedia data-base and in the same 15 newspapers with a national reach) of the metaphor going back to the 1990 start of Infomedia's records. This resulted in 39 articles.[1] Which is, of course, only a very rough indication, since I have not included electronic media (TV, radio, blogs or social media). Hence I cannot say anything about how *much* the metaphor is used. I do, however, think that I can give an indication of *how* the metaphor is used (what it "means").

In the analysis that follows below, I focus on how gender is discursively con-structed, including aspects of how these constructions are communicated. For in-stance the affinity between the journalists and the statements communicated indi-cates if these are seen as controversial or, on the contrary, evaluated as "natural". The theoretical and contextual framework leads me to a focus on when, how and in relation to what different aspects of performing politician are highlighted (and evaluated) in the gendered representations of Helle Thorning-Schmidt.

The Gender Card

One corner stone in the media representations of Thorning-Schmidt in the days after the election is the recurrent use of the gender card metaphor. The metaphor is interesting in several respects. Firstly, it introduces politics as a game where politicians and their parties play their cards or withhold them based on what wins – not on (the idea of) pure politics or political results. Secondly, it seems to be a way of introducing gender and negating it at the same time, since the point is that Thorning-Schmidt has won the election (at least in part) because she *did not* play the gender card. A typical use of the metaphor appears in this statement by the author Hanne-Vibeke Holst,[2] who is consulted as an expert by the daily *Politiken*:

> She has at no point during the election campaign played the gender card, spoken about gender equality or made specific appeals to a female electorate. On the contra-

> ry, she has toned down anything that could indicate that "here stands a female politi-
> cian" […] Thorning and her advisors have seen that the Social Democrats would
> lose votes if they spoke about the struggle for gender equality. (Politiken 2011)

The gender card is here associated with policies related to gender equality and appeals to female voters, and as such it points towards the identity-political assumptions regarding representation mentioned above. There is no direct reference to the bodily signs or the gender performance of Thorning-Schmidt in the quotation above, but it seems to be taken for granted that it takes a woman to play the gender card, and as such it is associated with feminine bodies. This is repeated in another daily, *Information,* where the journalist states that: "She is not known to be playing the gender card, and this goes for Thorning's party as well, they have neither used her femininity nor the question of gender equality in the election campaign." (Klingsey 2011)

   Playing the gender card is clearly not a proper thing to do – it amounts to foul play – and the meanings associated with the gender card (gender equality as a policy area; appealing to female voters) also indirectly become illegitimate by association. Even if the dominant view in Denmark is that gender equality is something "we" (i.e. the white Danish women) have obtained (cf. Borchorst, Christensen & Siim 2002: 260; Magnusson, Rönnblom & Silius 2008) and hence that struggling for it is a thing of the past, gender equality is never *directly* stated to be an illegitimate (or obsolete) policy issue. The ambiguous status of gender equality in the public debates in Denmark is reflected in an article entitled "The minor difference" by Anna Libak in the last edition before the election of the weekly paper *Weekendavisen.* According to Libak, you should not ask "women" if it makes a difference whether the PM is a man or a woman:

> If you do, most of them react emotionally almost aggressively: "No, why? Of course
> I haven't had gender in mind, when I voted." Or: "Listen, I grew out of that kind of
> feminism long ago." This is probably why the Social Democrats in the bygone elec-
> tion campaign avoided pointing out that Helle Thorning-Schmidt could be the first
> female PM in the almost 100 years since women were granted the right to vote. (Li-
> bak 2011)

The journalist distances herself through the imagined conversation with "Danish women": This is not something, *she* is saying or concluding, but a widespread opinion in the population. Libak subsequently quotes a male Social Democrat, who states that it would have been "vulgar" to draw attention to gender: "as if she was trying to give herself an unmerited advantage. But, still, she *has* let her hair down; it just hasn't been used as an argument" (ibid). In this statement, as well as (on closer inspection) in the two previous quotations, a split between gender as a speech act (talking about – or saying that – gender matters) and doing gender (the hair that has been let down) stand out. Further it appears that giving voice to "gender talk", is negatively evaluated even if gender is *there* embodied in Thorning-Schmidt's femininity. The ease with which stereotypical views of the

constituents of femininity go along with the rejection of gender as relevant in the craft of politics is notable.

Freedom of Choice

According to Erika Falk (2012), the metaphor "gender-card" first appears in the US media in the beginning of the 1990s while "race-card" has a longer history of use. I have not been able to establish more precisely when race-card is first used, but according to the BBC homepage, it emerges in the UK sometime in the 1960s.[3] Both metaphors, though in different ways, are linked to the notion that all political players are equal in opportunities: "[…] the American myth of the free and equal democratic society where anyone can get elected without regard to race, class, or gender." (Falk 2012: 11). As pointed out by Lee & Morin (2009:378) with regard to the race card, this in itself dates the metaphor as a phenomenon of the post-civil rights era, since racism was openly supported before this. Falk analyses the use of the gender card metaphor in US media taking Hillary Clinton's campaign to be nominated as the presidential candidate of the Democratic Party in 2008 as her point of departure. Falk summarizes her analysis as follows:

> If we combine the meaning of playing the gender card as argued above with the implicit connotation that it is a strategic and tactical move that confers advantage on the candidate, then we can see the following arguments are implicit in the metaphor and reveal some subtle premises of our culture. Women candidates who choose to (a) draw attention to their gender as women, or (b) argue that people should vote for a woman to remedy current underrepresentation, or (c) campaign on issues that women are more likely to support, or (d) express concern about sexism in the campaign or (e) mention that women face discrimination in the public sphere will help their campaigns. (Falk 2012: 10)

In addition, she points out that the tactical character of the metaphor implies that gender would not be a constituent of politics or culture for that matter, if women did not play the gender card. Or, to return to the point made earlier, if they do not speak (ab)out gender. Falk refers to this as "freedom of choice", but it corresponds to what I have called "pure politics". According to Falk, the idea of freedom of choice in Hillary Clinton's case meant that the US-media predominantly used the metaphor to denigrate Clinton (Falk 2012:11). Since the reference to politics as a play is central in this metaphor, I argue, that it will necessarily or at least predominantly be used to raise doubts about the motives of the one who is accused of playing it. It comes to connote a politics that is contaminated by issues which may be declared essentially irrelevant. This observation can also be supported by the fact that playing the gender card belongs to the world of commentators: nobody seems to state that they are playing the card themselves.

"The Hypocrisy of the Female Whiners"

In the Danish newspapers with a national circulation, the total number of articles using the phrase "gender card" in the period 2007-2012 amounts to 39 (see note 1); Thorning-Schmidt is one of the main protagonists in 27 of these. 2010 is the year with most hits (20) and out of these 16 are associated with the same media event: An interview with Hanne-Vibeke Holst in *Politiken* headlined: "The witches of our time" (Højbjerg 2010a). In the interview, Holst comments on two of the summer 2010 high profile media issues: The accusation of Thorning-Schmidt – or rather her husband – for evading tax payment in Denmark and the non-participation in an arctic top meeting of the then Minister of Foreign Affairs from the Conservative Party, Lene Espersen. Espersen instead went on holiday with her family.

Both of these "cases" involves family – the stage of private life. Tax evasion is particularly compromising for Thorning-Schmidt as the leader of the Social Democratic Party, where tax is linked to solidarity. But it is in addition associated with her family life in that her husband (Stephen Kinnock) has a top manager job in Geneva, which means that he is mostly in Denmark during weekends. Hence a busy top politician, and a mother of two children, is married to an absent father – this provides fruit for speculation in the media. The case has developed into something of a political scandal, which is still in full bloom as I am writing this article, mainly because of suspicions concerning political pressure (by the former minister of tax and his top administrative staff) on the Copenhagen tax authorities. One – seemingly – very odd offspring is that the case involves rumours concerning Kinnock's sexual orientation. The rationale of this rumour is not quite clear, but one interpretation in the media is that if Kinnock is bi- or homosexual, this would question his attachment to his family and to Denmark, and hence also his obligation to pay tax (Astrup 2012). It seems that tax, national attachment and family become articulated in ways that are not quite consistent with the normative (family) framework.

In the interview with Hanne-Vibeke Holst that gets the gender-card-ball running in 2010, Holst accuses the media of disproportionately "going after" female top politicians. But she adds that the two women have had a hand in the matter themselves, since they have been "playing with fire":

> The media love to expose beautiful and photogenic women like Helle Thorning-Schmidt and Lene Espersen. And they have both used this in their career moves. They have not been sufficiently aware of how dangerous it is to let the media eat you all up. For below the media fascination an age-old hatred of women is smouldering. This is let loose when these women show signs of weakness and crisis. (Højbjerg 2010a)

Thorning-Schmidt and Espersen are depicted as politicians who because of their good looks have privileged access to the media; and hence also privileged access to the voters. The ideal of pure politics is in circulation, since the implicit point of

departure is that a political career should not be built on looks – this, it seems, draws politics too much into the arena of celebrity scripts, where the media take over control. While Holst is critical of the media, she also goes along with the dominant discursive repertoire to some extent. Playing with fire is for instance a well-worn trope in relation to female (and male) sexuality (women "coming on" to men, but not wanting to fulfil the "promise") – an interpretation that is supported by the fact that the media in Holst's account are depicted as a stand-in for men, who "come to suffer from castration anxiety when they are challenged by strong women in the arena of power" (Højbjerg 2010a). In this context, it is however not the interview as a single event that is most interesting, but rather the explosive reaction to it. In the days after the interview was published, media representatives squarely denied that gender had anything to do with their representation of the two politicians, and Holst herself was verbally abused, often using a language loaded with gender stereotypes (for instance the headline: "You are a cry-baby [Da: tudefjæs], Holst; Højbjerg 2010b). In addition, there is an interesting slide in signification: in the interview with Holst, the journalist Rushy Rachid Højbjerg states that *Holst* is playing the gender card – but in several of the subsequent media reactions this is rearticulated so that it instead is Espersen and Thorning-Schmidt, who are guilty of playing this card. A former Member of Parliament for the Social Democrats, Torben Lund, writes in a comment in *Berlingske Tidende*:

> Get off this ridiculous and tiresome female whining [Da: kvindeklynk]. Even my grandfather's generation has long passed this stage. Five out of eight parties in the Parliament are led by women. It is pathetic and undignified, when female politicians play the gender card – both in election campaigns and when they are criticized. (Lund 2010)[4]

Again, the denial of gender as a distinction that makes a difference in doing politics is stated very loudly and in a language that is full of gender stereotypes ("female whining") which suggest that the female whiners are not managing their gender performance adequately. Even if Holst also have a few supporters in this 2010-debate, the overall trend is a total rejection of her suggestion that taking up a position as a (top) politician is difficult for women.

Sara Ahmed has argued in relation to "overcoming" identity politics and going beyond categories like gender and race, that: "Those who point to restrictions and blockages become identified with the restrictions and blockages they point to, as if we are creating what we are describing." (Ahmed 2012:180) This captures neatly what the accusation of playing the gender card amounts to in contemporary Denmark. Gender inequality is a thing of the past, and those who cry out about restrictions and blockages are creating these themselves – they are speaking them into existence. "The hypocrisy of the female whiners" [Da: Kvindeklynkernes hykleri], as Lund headlines his commentary cited above.

Precarious Balancing Acts

As already indicated the use of the gender card metaphor and other denials of the importance of gender, is accompanied or interrupted by evaluations of female corporeality. And here highly stereotypical notions or sticky signs, as Sarah Ahmed calls them (2004), are in circulation. In what follows I turn to these accounts of femininity and to the potential disturbance it carries.

The Necessary Balance

The disturbing or inappropriate features associated with femininity in politics are, according to the several experts consulted by the media: girlishness, "which many find difficult to align with the idea of a statesman", loose hair, sweetness, high pitch (Hanne-Vibeke Holst in Bonde, Crone & Thonbo-Carlsen 2011); "the feminine, emotional and fluttering" (Birgitte Dam Jensen, personal advisor in the Parliament; Ibid). The other way around, it is (in the same article) pointed out that Thorning-Schmidt has managed to become "rational, cool and controlled" (Hanne-Vibeke Holst) and business-like in her appearance (Birgitte Dam Jensen). In addition, the journalists state that the main theme of the election – economy – meant that women were disfavoured in advance, since this is a masculine policy area. The descriptions of a femininity that is "too much" are all written against an unstated masculine appropriateness. Thorning-Schmidt is praised for her ability to occupy a position defined by this appropriateness; she is business-like in appearance, rational, cool and controlled in her behaviour; and she navigates the intricacies of the economy. The authority associated with pure politics is foregrounded here.

However, it is also directly apparent in the media coverage of the election that it is necessary to enact a balance between the opposed poles of "too feminine" and "too masculine" – or perhaps: "not feminine enough" (Staunæs & Søndergaard 2008). Hence Thorning-Schmidt's business-like appearance is in *Information* – under the headline "Low key in stilettos" – described as a successful balance:

> The new PM manages at one and the same time to appear very feminine in skirt suits and very high heels […] and on the other hand to dress so soberly that her clothes do not attract attention. And this is wise, Ritt Bjerregaard points out: "we women – even if it gets better the older you are – are consistently evaluated with reference to our looks and clothes. She has decided not to waste time on this." (Klingsey 2011)

Soberly feminine seems to be an appropriate corporeality. One that allows you to perform politician without being disturbed by undue audience attention to sartorial matters. The expert confirming the description is Ritt Bjerregaard, a Social Democrat with a long and high profile political career behind her (she has been a minister several times, a member of the EU-commission and mayor of Copenhagen). Also adhering to this logic of the necessary balance, gender researcher Karen

Sjørup is in an article in *Politiken* quoted for saying that Thorning-Schmidt has managed to strike the difficult balance:

> […] between neither being too caring and mothering nor too masculine and hard. Or for that matter relying too much on sex. She has found the balance and this is perhaps her asset, in contrast to Ritt Bjerregaard and Lene Espersen, who fell to each their side in this divide. Feminism has finally reached the top. (Politiken 2011)

It may be that the quotation is pieced together from an oral conversation that did not proceed in the same way as it is presented in the paper. But the causality established as the quotation stands is nevertheless that "feminism" (rather than "a female politician") has reached the top *because* of the proper balancing act.

The explicit attention to gender as important to politics in the election coverage is strongly associated with bodily signs and embodied behavioural scripts, and they follow a well-known repertoire constructed over a mind-body binary: The statesman (who apart from the name, of course, is left unmarked with respect to gender) is hard, rational, business-like and controlled. Femininity, in contrast, is (potentially) associated with emotionality, fluttering, care, mothering, sweetness, high-pitched voices and bodies that signal sexuality. As pointed out in the introduction the disturbances of femininity and the opposite poles that need to be balanced correspond to what feminist research of political institutions in a variety of national contexts has pointed to as the gendered scripts that constitute blockages and restrictions for female bodies (cf. Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen 2012; Hammarlin & Jarlbro 2012; van Zoonen 2006; 2011). They are also ingredients in the four Hollywood scripts described by van Zoonen (2005). These are *potential* disturbances in the sense that not all female politicians will be received as disturbing by their audience (be it the electorate, the media or other politicians), but since the association between femininity and these signs are strong or sticky, female politicians are always up against the potential of being stuck with one or the other; and judging from interview based research, they are very aware of this (Ross & Sreberny-Mohammadi 1997; Ross 2002; Puwar 2004; Crawford & Pini 2010).

On the Art of Balancing in Stilettos

The descriptions of Thorning-Schmidt above focus on her appropriateness in relation to the statesman position; and most of the accompanying photos depict her in one of the often brightly coloured tight skirt suits (referred to above as "sober"); but there are exceptions to this rule. In "On high heels in Europe" (Kongstad & Mariessa 2011), a European perspective on the election result is presented. While the article only sporadically touch on gender and is more preoccupied with the relation between "red" and "blue" in the EU after the Danish election, the headline points in another direction – and the same goes for the statement, that: "[in Europe] the good looks and the fact that she will be the first female PM in Denmark takes precedence over Helle Thorning-Schmidt's plans for Europe" (ibid).

The distinction between political plans (pure politics) and looks is apparent here, but is described as something "the others" (the Europeans) establish. The comments from Europe and the article itself are grouped around a whole page picture of Thorning-Schmidt – hair down and mouth in a slight smile – wearing a long and very red party dress and golden stilettos. Her arms (golden clutch in one hand) reach out towards the viewer (is she balancing perhaps?), and the eyes are turned down towards the floor. There is something decidedly "celebrity-walking-the-red-carpet-to-the-Oscar-awards" to the picture. According to another article in the same genre (comments from abroad) Thorning-Schmidt is welcomed to Europa under her old nick-name "Gucci-Helle" (Bostrup, Lauritzen & Wiwel 2011).

The picture and especially the nick-name, which was allegedly coined by a fellow party member, are reminders of a previous less favourable evaluation of Thorning-Schmidt's enactment of balance (as also seen in the analysis of the gender card metaphor above). Her particular brand of celebrity style is expensive and refined, and this has threatened to become a breach in the coherence of her performance of representativeness. It sits uneasily with the ideal working class image of a Social Democrat. One may note in passing, that the suit – here understood not as a metaphor but as the politician's working attire – blur the visibility of class for her male colleagues. But there is a difference between stepping into the position leader of the Social Democrats and the position statesman. Representing the nation (abroad) is not a class issue in the same way as representing the party (in the Parliament and the public). So, balancing the enactment of femininity in politics is an on-going business, which always involves other distinctions that intersect in specific ways – and changes over time.

The stilettos are, as indicated several times above, almost routinely associated with Thorning-Schmidt. They refer to her femininity, but also to balance, celebrity, and occasionally they also have a slight edge of danger to them. As is the case in this sole example of a neutral use of the gender card metaphor in my sample. In the article from 2007 Fredrik Preisler from the communication bureau Propaganda is quoted for saying that the leader of the Social Democrats doesn't seem to be afraid to play up the gender difference between her and Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the PM in office at the time:

> When she was asked last Wednesday whether she was ready for the [2007] election campaign, her answer was that lately she has slept with her stilettos on, and then the camera, of course, zoomed in on her elegant legs and the skirt, that efficiently descended the stairs. Fogh, on the other hand, always speak about "putting on the work-wear", which is a dark suit. (Thorup 2007)

The article further suggests that Fogh is not particularly eager to meet Thorning-Schmidt, and that this exposes him as a supporter of a patriarchy and hence someone who is not comfortable with the modern woman. Apart from the oblique mentioning of patriarchy, the reasoning above is entirely dedicated to a display of

Thorning-Schmidt as a flashy and slightly dangerous celebrity in contrast to the dull dark suit.

As I am writing this – more than a year after the 2011 election – the popularity ratings of Thorning-Schmidt and her government are poor. While this no doubt has to do with the political choices made by the government, the media evaluations of Thorning-Schmidt have frequently insinuated that her alleged shortcomings are (also) associated with her gender. It seems that the evaluation of Thorning-Schmidt's performance as perfectly balanced in the immediate aftermath of the election was rather short-lived. Perhaps it relied mostly on the fact that she, or rather the red coalition of which she was the PM candidate, (narrowly) won the election; and that this in turn meant that she became the first female PM in Denmark.

Don't Mention it; Just do it Right!

So what can I, based on the material I have analysed, say about the production and reproduction of gendered scripts in a self-declared post-feminist context? And in what way is the oscillation between explicit representations of gendered relations as an irrelevant policy issue *and* the continuing policing of femininity related to this context?

The dismissal of gender (in)equality as a relevant political topic seems to be associated with the widespread withdrawal from "identity politics" – for which the gender card metaphor can be seen as a short hand – in public debates as well as in academia. The (necessary) de-essentialisation of the category "woman" thus seems to be accompanied by the idea that gendered power relations have disappeared altogether. Thus, as noted above, those who point to gendered restrictions and blockages are accused of creating these themselves in order to gain unmerited advantages. In the media texts I have analysed there is, however, a recurrent hesitation when it comes to how this is communicated. The distancing moves – imagined conversations, quotations, use of expert statements – observable in how the journalists arrive at a dismissal of gender as an obstacle or even just relevant in politics, point towards this not being a quite safe terrain. Gendered inequality is admitted to *have been* a pertinent feature. In addition the rearticulation of gender equality to the nation means that modern Danishness has become represented as the epitome of gender equality (something Denmark shares with the other Nordic countries; Magnusson, Rönnblom & Silius 2008). Thus gender equality has become an export commodity (in development aid for instance) or something that white majority Denmark need to administer to – especially female – ethnic and racialized minorities. Gender equality is not totally off the agenda, but it is on it in a very specific way.

The dismissal of gender talk is accompanied – at the other end of the oscillation – by readings of gender that rely on a performative register not associated

with "talk" but with corporeal enactments. The doings of gender are visible to the audience and commented upon, using sticky associations between bodies and scripts as interpretive repertoires. Further, the corporeal scripts are presented by the media in a matter-of-fact way and stated by an array of commentators, some of whom make a living out of advising on the right scripts (the personal advisor) and others who make a living out of scrutinizing these scripts critically (the gender researcher). This was one reason for my initial puzzlement: the required balancing acts of some bodies are in the aftermath of the 2011-election presented with no critical edge whatsoever, even if some of the commentators in other circumstances would be criticizing gendered power relations. Hence the applause is – for lack of better word – innocently cheering at Thorning-Schmidt's perfectly balanced or coherent performance of female politician. The audience is knowledgeable when it comes to the scripts *and* satisfied with the performance. My argument is *not*, that these representations are naïve, i.e. it is not that they ignore, or are ignorant of, years of feminist critique. I suggest, instead, that this is related to "the post-feminist context" in another way. Hence, there is no doubt that the range of available options of enacting gender – and the partial break down of the binary between femininity and masculinity – has proliferated over the last several decades. Gendered scripts have broadly come to be *understood as* a playground, even if in practice the play or the ground is usually limited. van Zoonen, referring to Madonna as her example, points out that in the arena of popular culture, "[…] female celebrities have subverted myths of femininity by explicitly playing with them and reinventing them." (van Zoonen 2005:93). The problem for Thorning-Schmidt and her female colleagues is, however, that this play is not easily transferred to the arena of parliamentary politics, where a masculine somatic norm and the associated ideal of pure politics need to be addressed in concert with the requirement to "step out of the suit". While "Gaga-feminism" (Halberstam 2012) should not be underestimated, the different domains of society are not equally receptive to this repertoire of (subversive) gendered enactments. It seems that in the arena of parliamentary politics rather than subverting the well-worn stereotypes, they are reinforced through the intertwining with popular culture.

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Notes

[1] http://www.infomedia.dk/. My initial search took place on 6-5-2012 using the words "kønskort(et)" (gender card) and "kvindekort(et)" (the female card) – these two versions of the metaphor seems to be used synonymously in Denmark. The result was 38 hits. A supplementary search for the period between 6-5-12 and 15-10-12 revealed only one more hit for 2012.

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
Hits	3	4	0	20	10	2	39

[2] Hanne-Vibeke Holst has amongst other books written *Kronprinsessen [The Crown Princess], Kongemordet [The Murder of the King],* and *Dronningeofret [The Sacrifice of The Queen].* All three books are located in Sweden and deal with the political intrigues in the Swedish Social Democratic Party – and include gender-issues as well. They have, in addition, been turned into a TV-series produced by Swedish Bob Film and sent between 2006 and 2010 in Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark.

[3] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/special_report/1999/02/99/e-cyclopedia/1292973.stm

[4] Excerpts, i.e. the punchiest formulations, from Lund's comment are recirculated as short quotations in several other papers (*BT, Kristeligt Dagblad, Information*) the next day 26-8-2010.

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The Soundtrack of Revolution
Memory, Affect, and the Power of Protest Songs

By Tiina Rosenberg

Abstract

All cultural representations in the form of songs, pictures, literature, theater, film, television shows, and other media are deeply emotional and ideological, often difficult to define or analyze. Emotions are embedded as a cultural and social soundtrack of memories and minds, whether we like it or not. Feminist scholarship has emphasized over the past decade that affects and emotions are a foundation of human interaction. The cognitive understanding of the world has been replaced by a critical analysis in which questions about emotions and how we relate to the world as human beings is central (Ahmed 2004: 5-12).

It is in this memory-related instance that this article discusses the unexpected reappearance of a long forgotten song, *Hasta siempre,* as a part of my personal musical memory. It is a personal reflection on the complex interaction between memory, affect and the genre of protest songs as experiences in life and music. What does it mean when a melody intrudes in the middle of unrelated thoughts, when one's mind is occupied with rational and purposive considerations? These memories are no coincidences, I argue, they are our forgotten selves singing to us.

Keywords: Music, memory, affect, emotion, feminism, gender, kitsch, solidarity.

Overture

We have all been there: Suddenly a melody comes into our head without our knowing how it got there. On a recent trip to Cuba I heard the refrain of a long forgotten song: "Aquí se queda la Clara / la entrañable transparencia / de tu querida presencia / Comandante Che Guevara" (your beloved and luminous presence / became clear here / Comandante Che Guevara). With tears in my eyes I tried to explain to my partner that they were playing *the* song. "Which song?" she asked, but I was already heading for the bandstand, drawn by the music of *Hasta Siempre* (Forever), the popular song about Ernesto Guevara, who was better known to the world as Che or "Comandante".

It was my emotional and literally melodramatic soundtrack talking back to me. All cultural representations in the form of songs, pictures, literature, theater, film, television shows, and other media are deeply emotional and ideological, often difficult to define or analyze. Emotions are embedded as a cultural and social soundtrack of memories and minds, whether we like it or not. Feminist scholarship has emphasized over the past decade that affects and emotions are a foundation of human interaction. The cognitive understanding of the world has been replaced by a gender analysis in which questions about the relationship between "our" and the "other's" emotions, and how we relate to the world as human beings is central (Ahmed 2004: 5-12). The world is an affective place and life supplies us with melodies we need for our journey.

The Greek word *meloidia* means song. Drama is a specific form of fiction presented in performance. Together they form the compound *melodrama.* In this memory-related instance the song I heard transformed itself into a haunting melody. *Hasta siempre* is performed everywhere in Cuba, but it is not the performance of the song as such that concerns me here. It is my musical memory of the song that possessed and refused to let go. It welcomed me and my memories back to Cuba.

The Haunting Melody

The interaction between melody and memory is complex. In his 1953 book, *The Haunting Melody*, the psychoanalyst Theodor Reik discusses his psychoanalytic experiences in life and music. He asks what it means when a melody intrudes in the middle of unrelated thoughts, when your mind is occupied with rational and purposive considerations (Reik 1953: vii). Musical memory is linked to the process of retention, recall, and recognition, a notion that Sigmund Freud mentions in passing in his *Psychopathology of Everyday Life,* but does not develop further. Freud's general aversion to music is one of his well-known characteristics. Late in life he developed a fondness for Mozart, especially *Don Giovanni* and *Le nozze di Figaro*. Brisk walks used to stimulate the flow of Freud's thoughts, rather than

music. One of the reasons for his dislike of music has been identified as *musico-genic epilepsy*, a strong physical and memory-based epileptic reaction to music that Freud observed in his patients (Roth 1986). It is, of course, difficult to say why someone as culturally well-rounded as Freud disliked music. He simply stated that he was "ganz unmusikalisch", totally unmusical (Roth 1986: 759).

Other psychoanalysts have taken an interest in music, Reik among them. His curiosity in this area was awakened when a melody from Mahler's Second Symphony, the *Resurrection Symphony,* lodged in his mind during a walk in the Alps, an experience that took him a lifetime to understand. As he writes:

> In December 1925, I felt unusually tired and weary, fed up with daily analytic practice. I decided to get a week of recreation and to spend the vacation between Christmas and New Year's on the Semmering. This is a summer and winter resort, about three hours' ride from Vienna, high up in the mountains. There are quite a few hotels, and my family and I had enjoyed the clear and sharp mountain air of the place before. We spent the Christmas evening at a hotel we had stopped at on previous occasions. On the evening of December 25 I received a telephone call from Vienna. A colleague told me the sad news that Karl Abraham had died, and he asked me in the name of Freud to deliver a speech in memory of our friend at the next meeting of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. (Reik 1953: 220)

Reik goes on to describe how he was beset by Mahler's music, which refused leave him. This experience made him want to write a book about melodies that haunt people. Reik hoped that an analysis of the phenomenon in general, and his own comprehension of Mahler's symphony in particular, would help him understand the message of his unconscious. The outcome was a unique and fascinating self-analysis in which Mahler's music addressed the fundamental conflict that had guided Reik's whole life: the struggle between feelings of shameful worthlessness and grandiose overcompensation. Reik discovered that melodies give voice to the unconscious: the unknown self begins to sing because music is so close to our emotions. He also found that the triumph of Mahler's symphony was not that it consoled him for the loss of a beloved friend; rather, it expressed his forbidden joy in Karl Abraham's death. Reik had secretly longed to supplant Abraham as the world's leading psychoanalyst. He now concluded that the haunting melody that would not leave him was his unconscious trying to tell him something about his own self that had been forgotten or had become constricted, something that was once important to him.

Protests in Public Places

It is midnight in Chicago's Grant Park on November 4, 2008. Barack Obama has just been elected the first African-American president of the United States. He stands on a platform in the chill night air and tells 100000 cheering supporters, "It's been a long time coming, but tonight, because of what we did on this day, in this election, at this defining moment, change has come to America" (Lynskey

2011: xiii). The line has a familiar ring. It is a paraphrase of words written by the soul singer Sam Cooke some forty-five years earlier: "It's been a long, a long time coming, but I know a change gonna come." At this historic moment, one of the great speakers of the day borrowed the most memorable line of his acceptance speech from an old protest song.

Fifty years earlier and much further to the south, Ernesto "Che" Guevara lauded another famous orator, his friend and co-revolutionary, Fidel Castro, by saying that Fidel

> has his own special way of fusing himself with the people [which] can be appreciated only by seeing him in action. At the great public mass meetings one can observe something like a dialogue of two tuning forks whose vibrations interact, producing new sounds. Fidel and the mass begin to vibrate together in a dialogue of growing intensity until they reach a climax in an abrupt conclusion crowned by our cry of struggle and victory. (Deutschmann & Shnookal 2007: xii)

Most cities have a public place in the form of a central square. The demonstrations in the Middle East, at Syntagma Square in Athens, the Occupy Wall Street movement in the US, Los Indignados in Spain, and the student revolts in Chile are just a few examples of the return to the *agora*, Athens' classic square in which free citizens (women and slaves excluded) could participate in contemporary democratic processes. Although today's new social media are effective in spreading information, demonstrations still require the bodily presence of individuals in order to instill power into political slogans. There are many examples of the organization of public space in the history of demonstrations. The large trans-local Vietnam demonstrations of the late 1960s, the demonstrations of the anti-globalization movement that began in Seattle in 1999, the anti-war demonstrations over the invasion of Iraq in the early 2000s, and the massive demonstrations in different parts of the world in 2010-2011 (so numerous and intense that *Time* magazine chose The Protester as the 2011 personality of the year) all showed how to occupy and use public space.

Public protests are a significant part of activist culture. The post 9/11 period has greatly restricted protests and the use of public space in the West. At the beginning of the twentieth century it was still possible to shut down factories and sometimes even whole cities, through strikes. Protest occupations and sit-ins were a tool the labor movement used to challenge the capitalist political economy. Trade unions were linked in solidarity to form a large social movement. "It created an awareness of the importance of 'taking' physical locations," observed American historian Rosemary Feuer in an interview (quoted in Hellquist 2011: 6). Social media are important, but there is no revolt possible without a physical presence and the collective corporeality of specific locations. Feuer goes on to point out that what remain of this tradition today are solidarity rallies that last for a day or two. She believes that the Arab Spring and the spin-off of the Occupy Wall

Street have reminded people of the need to have physical social spaces in order to build protest movements and communities (quoted in Hellquist 2011: 6).

Protest Songs

However, demonstrations need more than physical locations in which to take place: the atmosphere is equally important. Therefore, demonstration cultures contain significant aesthetic elements, such as music. During the Arab Spring of 2011, several songs were performed and recorded in Tahrir Square. The singer known as El General (Hamada Ben Amor) challenged the Tunisian president (now ex-president) Zine El Abedine Ben Ali with the song *Mr. President, Your People are Dying*, a protest refrain that quickly spread through the Internet. Hip-hop and rap are the genres of the younger generation's protest music, for one thing because they are simple and cheap to produce. In place of a band of musicians, all one needs is a beat and something to say. It is the undisputed contemporary genre for advancing social criticism (Hebdige 1979; Rose 1994, 2008; Eyerman & Jamison 1998; Lynskey 2011; Sernhede & Söderman 2012).

Protest and battle songs date back centuries. During the French Revolution people were marching to the tune of 'La Marseillaise': "Aux armes, citoyens / formez vos bataillons / marchons, marchons! / Qu'un sang impur/ Abreuve nos sillons!" (To arms, citizens / form your battalions! / March, march! / Let impure blood water our furrows!) which later became France's national anthem. *The Internationale*, the song of the labor movement from the early 1900s, is still sung on squares around the world on May Day, the day celebrating the movement's birth. In the 1960s, the music of Bob Dylan and Joan Baez attracted thousands of people to outdoor concerts, while the London riots of 2011 were accompanied by dance music that created a completely different atmosphere reminiscent of some of the sounds of The Clash's classic *London Calling* (Lynskey 2011).

The commitment and mood of political gatherings are what drew people to them. Joan Baez, who rose to prominence at the Newport Festival in 1960, fought against racism with Martin Luther King Jr., traveled to Vietnam, and was imprisoned, states that "politics would be very unrealistic in the streets unless it involves music. The music pours forth from the soul, especially in times of crisis" (quoted in Hellquist 2011: 6). She sees rock and pop music as having coincided in a fruitful way with the American protest movements of 1960s and 1970s: "I call it 'the perfect storm': the music, politics, the civil rights movement, the war in Vietnam" (quoted in Hellquist 2011: 6). Lynskey writes that in order for a protest song to take hold it must be part of a larger political movement. He concludes that while the past fifteen years have seen many protest songs, no larger social movement has emerged to unite them. However, music can act as a mediator and cohesive element, as has happened to the Internet-based music culture of the Arab Spring (Lynskey 2011).

While Lynskey treats protest songs as a form of pop music that arises out of concern, anger, doubt, and, in almost every case, sincere emotion, film scholar Linda Williams points to melodrama, horror, and pornographic films as "body genres" that use tears, fear, and sexual arousal to elicit evisceral reactions among viewers (Williams 1991: 2-13). Her idea recalls Aristotle's theory of catharsis and can also be applied to a certain kind of music that requires immense exertion from performers and in turn provokes strong corporeal responses among members of the audience. Protest song is such a genre.

An affect is usually the immediate physiological reaction to a stimulus. In my case it took the form of tears. Characteristic of affects is that they are bodily expressions, and bodily reactions are more immediate than conscious emotional awareness. Human beings become aware of their reactions only after the fact. Affects are inscribed on our emotional and memory-based soundtracks early in life. These memories are archived, and as it were, make their reappearance when least expected. Bodily-based affects are the total sum of the events one has experienced in life. Thus, how people relate to their emotions is determined not only by the individual, but also by one's life history and the culture of which we all are a part. My trip to Cuba brought something vital from the past to life again.

Refrain of a Song

Hasta siempre exists in a number of versions: the Cuban revolutionary original, a rock tune, Latino pop, jazz, salsa, bolero, reggae, and hip-hop/rap. The Cuban composer Carlos Pueblo wrote it in 1965 in response to Che Guevara's farewell letter to the Cuban people. *Hasta siempre* expresses the gratitude of the Cuban people to their beloved Che:

> Aprendimos a quererte / desde la histórica altura donde el sol de tu bravura / le puso cerco a la muerte. Chrous: Aquí se queda la clara / la entrañable transparencia / de tu querida presencia/ Comandante Che Guevara. Tu mano gloriosa y fuerte / sobre la historia dispara/ cuando todo Santa Clara / se despierta para verte. *Chorus:* Aquí se queda la clara / la entrañable transparencia / de tu querida presencia / Comandante Che Guevara. Vienes quemando la brisa / con soles de primavera / para plantar la bandera / con la luz de tu sonrisa. *Chorus:* Aquí se queda la clara / la entrañable transparencia / de tu querida presencia / Comandante Che Guevara. Tu amor revolucionario / te conduce a nueva empresa / donde esperan la firmeza / de tu brazo libertario. *Chrous:* Aquí se queda la clara / la entrañable transparencia / de tu querida presencia / Comandante Che Guevara. Seguiremos adelante / como junto a ti seguimos / y con Fidel te decimos: Hasta siempre, Comandante!. *Chrous:* Aquí se queda la clara / la entrañable transparencia / de tu querida presencia / Comandante Che Guevara.

In English translation the song goes something like this:

> We learned to love you / from the heights of history / with the radiance of your bravery / you laid siege to death. *Chorus:* Your beloved and luminous presence / became clear here / Comandante Che Guevara. Your glorious and strong hand / fires at history / when all of Santa Clara awakens to see you. *Chorus:* Your beloved and lu-

minous presence / became clear here / Comandante Che Guevara. You come burning the winds / with spring suns to plant the flag / with the light of your smile. *Chorus:* Your beloved and luminous presence / became clear here / Comandante Che Guevara. Your revolutionary love / leads you to a new undertaking / where they are awaiting the firmness / of your liberating arm. *Chorus:* Your beloved and luminous presence / became clear here / Comandante Che Guevara. We will carry on as we did along with you / and with Fidel we say to you / You will always be with us, Comandante! *Chorus:* Your beloved and luminous presence / became clear here / Comandante Che Guevara.

My problem with *Hasta siempre* is that it associates religious overtones with a male revolutionary hero. It is not difficult to recognize the worship of another stereotypical altruistic male revolutionary, Jesus Christ, as the paradigm of *Hasta siempre*. It may, therefore, be relevant to ask whether I, as a queer feminist, can forgive anything for a good tune? Why I am crying as I listen to *Hasta siempre,* although I can understand all the problems connected with this sort of worship? In my research, and in several books and articles, I have dealt with affect, voice, gender, and sexuality: the mezzosoprano in trouser roles ("the Sapphonics"), women in Wagner's operas (voice and power), Zarah Leander and queer diva culture, and, in my most recent book, anger, hope, and solidarity (Rosenberg 1998, 2000, 2006, 2009, 2012). The emotional connections are complex and we are not always in control of how our internal soundboard resonates when played upon by certain melodies. In Reik's psychoanalytical terms it is the unknown or forgotten self who sings in our head.

In an essay entitled "Le grain de la voix" (The Grain of Voice) Roland Barthes proposes the rebirth of the author "inside" of the artwork. Barthes eliminates a specifically male position (the author, logos) by supplying it with its overtly female and musical force: the voice. What we experience, Barthes writes, is the voice, not the musical notation, and it transcends its "masculinity" (Barthes 1981). In Barthes' thought, as in French poststructuralist theory in general, the feminine is the utopic space, the Promised Land we have not yet experienced. Barthes also makes a distinction between representing and presenting live bodies on stage. Performance is characterized by a certain instability, something a prescriptive narrative has difficulties controlling. This means that the singing voice that conveys a haunting melody in a performance is not merely representing a given piece of music. It is the key to something forgotten that was once important to the listener. The reaction does not need to be the Freudian musicogenic epilepsy, and yet it is always a physical occurrence.

For Barthes, listening is an active erotic act that takes place in a space where body and language meet without completely merging into one another (Barthes 1981). In this combination of the abstract and corporeal, he sees an art form without a system of the signifier and the signified. The grain of the voice is the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue. In my own case *Hasta siempre* carried me back to my personal entrance into leftist politics. The military takeover by

Augusto Pinochet in Chile occurred in 1973, when I was fifteen years old, and it awakened me politically. This early political engagement was accompanied by a musical repertory of protest song that I have carried in my memory to this day. *Hasta siempre*, to use Barthes's notion, was my memory speaking its mother tongue.

Sentimentality and Revolutionary Kitsch

I understand, of course, that I am the perfect target for the Cuban tourist industry in branding revolutionary nostalgia as kitsch and selling it to middle-aged Western leftist visitors. My tears over all kinds of unfinished revolutions are an illustration of political sentimentality (but also frustration) over the state of leftist politics today.

Sentimentality has gotten a bad reputation because of its kitschy aesthetics. The scholars and theorists who associate sentimentality with kitsch, especially those who do so with political aspirations, are not only students of loving and tender feelings; they also position sentimentality in a broader cultural and political context. There is no consensus as to what constitutes kitsch, but ever since the term was coined sometime after World War I, it has enjoyed notoriety. It is an epithet that denotes worthless, commercial art, or simply any kind of bad art. But not all substandard art qualifies as kitsch, nor can kitsch, in the words of Austrian writer Hermann Broch, be seen unconditionally as artistic failure, that is, a work of art in which everything went wrong (Broch 1955: 295-309).

Emotions have long been looked at with suspicion although there have been philosophers such as David Hume who have praised the importance of emotions in relation to reason, rationality, and morality. Research increasingly shows that emotions cannot only be seen as a threat to rationality, but may be a prerequisite to it (Cvetkovich 2003; Nussbaum 2003; Ahmed 2004; Berlant 2004). Theorists have emphasized how affects have assumed a central role in society, especially as elements of social networks and new social media.

Feminist theorist Sara Ahmed explores how emotions work to shape the "surfaces" of individual and collective bodies, that is, how bodies take the shape of the contact they have with objects and others (Ahmed 2004: 1). She writes:

> One way of reflecting on this history of thinking about emotion is to consider the debate about the relation between emotion, bodily sensation and cognition […] Emotion is the feeling of bodily change. The immediacy of the 'is' suggests that emotions do not involve processes of attribution or evaluation: we feel fear, for example, because our heart is racing, our skin is sweating. A cognitivist view would be represented by Aristotle, and by a number of thinkers who follow him. (Ahmed 2004: 2)

Ahmed approaches emotions as a form of cultural politics or world-making. Her argument about the cultural politics of emotions is

> developed not only as a critique of the psychologizing and privatization of emotions, but also as a critique of a model of social structure that neglects the emotional intensities, which allow such structures to be reified as forms of being. Attention to emotions allows us to address the question of how subjects become *invested* in particular structures such that their demise is felt as a kind of living death. (Ahmed 2004: 12)

Sentimentality and kitsch are often defined as bad taste, but it has been hard to identify what exactly constitutes this bad taste. The early critique of kitsch and sentimentality as formulated in the 1950s and 1960s by Broch and others such as Ludwig Giesz in *Phänomenologie de Kitsches* was based on a critique of Nazism and its use of emotionality for political propaganda. This notion has been re-evaluated by queer theorists interested in camp as a special cultural sensibility for queers. It was formulated by cultural theorist Susan Sontag in her ground-breaking essay "Notes on camp" and later developed by a number of queer scholars writing on aesthetic theory (Sontag 1964; Koestenbaum 1993;Cleto 1999).

A general definition of camp has been formulated by cultural theorist David Bergman as follows:

> First, everyone agrees that camp is a style (whether of objects or of the way objects are perceived is debated) that favors 'exaggeration', 'artifice' and 'extremity', Second, camp exists in tension with popular culture, commercial culture, or consumerist culture. Third, the person who can recognize camp, who sees things as campy, or who can camp is a person outside of the cultural mainstream. Fourth, camp is affiliated with homosexual culture, or at least with a self-conscious eroticism that throws into question the naturalization of desire. (quoted in Cleto 1999: 4)

In this re-interpretation of kitsch as an element of camp, it forms its own aesthetic category, a status it shares with queer as culturally undesirable. Also like queer, kitsch has been banished to the nether realms of cultural history, to oblivion, to the domain of the invisible and inaudible. Similar to the way in which sentimentality is denied and described as perverse, the disdain for kitsch appears to create a special form of cultural and artistic non-existence that constantly demands attention, but at the same time has to be disregarded so as not to sully normative 'great' art and culture (Rosenberg 2005).

Nevertheless, unsophisticated junk – artistic detritus – has a unique allure. The Frankfurt School criticized mass culture and its devastating impact with reference to Nazism. Kitsch, in the critical Marxist analysis, was a base and despised element. In a definitive essay on kitsch theory entitled "Einige Bemerkungen zum Problem des Kitsches", Broch designates kitsch as the evil in the value system of art (Broch 1955: 295-309). Giesz developed Broch's notion of kitsch and contextualized it as a part of the modern mass culture stating that kitsch has a strong emotional aura (*Gefühlsaura*) and that a person who loves and consumes kitsch (*Kitschmensch*) tends to be over-emotional and sentimental (Giesz 1971: 39). Aesthetically, kitsch has come to be associated with such subject matter as weeping children and gaudy sunsets in cheap poster art. Kitsch products tend to be variations on the theme of beauty that are exceedingly charged with emotional, sen-

timental stereotypes that "spontaneously" arouse pre-programmed responses, such as tears. Typically, the subject is rendered in such a way that is unmistakably easy to recognize (Kulka 1988: 18-27).

Kitsch has a special, highly ambiguous relationship to modernity and modernism. Sentimentality is often defined as exaggerated emotionality. It is insincere and of lower standing than High Art. Modernism initiated a shift in values that cultural theorist Rita Felski has characterized as "cultural remasculinization" (Felski 1999: 11-35). One objection to Broch's and Giesz's critique is that emotionality was once common to both women and men, and was not feminized until the emergence of modern Western culture. It was then that a detached, non-emotional attitude attained a higher status than emotionality. Over time sentimentality became increasingly associated with femininity, fantasy worlds, and sexuality. Terms such as sentimental, melodramatic, theatrical, and romantic were given negative, outmoded connotations relating to phenomena that turned away from a critical analysis of reality in favour of beautiful illusions and strong or exaggerated emotional expressions.

Sentimentality is commonly associated with soft, comforting, and tender feelings, such as care, sympathy, affection, and empathy. These feelings do not immediately arouse the censure of aestheticians in the way sentimental pleasure does. What the critics deride is boundless, uninhibited hedonism. It is sentimentality of that sort they condemn as immoral and unworthy (Knight 1999: 411-420).

In fact, some denounce sentimentality as perverse (Kupfer 1996: 543-550). The pleasure it gives is excessive and repetitive. Thus, a consumer of sentimental genres watches the same films and repeatedly listens to the same music (including melodramatic bel canto arias and bombastic Wagner overtures) over and over. Joseph Kupfer, one of the more scathing critics of sentimentality, claims that sentimentality is a character flaw rather than an aesthetic expression (Kupfer 1996: 543-550). He regards with disgust anyone so low as to wallow in a sentimental flood of emotions, as Flaubert's Emma Bovary once did. Kupfer dismisses the sentimentalist as self-centred and maintains that the object of sentimentality is the sentimentalist her or himself.

Last Movement

I enjoyed my revolutionary kitsch because it reminded me of many things I still believe in. Art historian Kathleen Higgins, who has studied picture postal and greeting cards with cute kittens, wide-eyed spaniels, and other sentimental motifs, speaks of "sweet kitsch" (Higgins 1990). She wishes to shift the focus of kitsch from the objects of pleasure to what she considers to be its most essential aspect: response and experience. She claims that kitsch and non-kitsch objects arouse the same kind of feelings. What sets the categories apart is that some people are

drawn to kitsch, while others shy away from what they find to be unsophisticated and blatant sentimentality.

One possible clue in understanding kitsch lies in the "stickiness" *(Klebrigkeit)* of sentimentality, as stated by Broch and Giesz. Much music is penetrating, but kitschy sentimentalism has an appeal that is compelling with an astonishing power – a power that dodges common sense and goes straight for the effect. This penetrating capacity seizes us whether we like it or not. In "Der Fall Wagner" Nietzsche writes that Wagner's music not only attacks the listener but is intended to persuade the nerves (*die Nerven überreden*) (Nietzsche 1888/1983). Wagner's ecstatic music operates bodily-physically in approximately the same way as drugs or ecstatic sex.

In the worlds of sexuality and sentimentality, tears, body, and sensuality are merged to form a unity that does not slacken its grip. It is sticky and cannot be shaken off. Sticky things, like bodily effluents, are fluid, soft, and flexible. They shape themselves according to emotional movement. In the same way that they merge subject and object, they are also both passively receptive and actively penetrating. Stickiness symbolizes the sensual being and the concrete experience of this sensuality.

My analysis falls short of grasping the complex feelings *Hasta siempre* aroused in me, but it says something of the emotional power of music. Music as a mediator of the emotions is more potent than words because melodies (*meloidia*) are closer to our feelings than words (*logos*). By the time a melody takes possession of your mind, you might wonder how it came there. The haunting Cuban melody also reminded me that one never gets the revolution one wants. Human life and social justice always require solidarity, but solidarity cannot be their sole issue. New social movements and their accompanying coalition politics often refuse to let themselves be guided by political parties or parliamentary systems. On the one hand, they make room for the many novel social movements that appear, while on the other, they have failed to achieve a more durable, comprehensive solution without falling into totalitarianism.

If political empathy makes us share the feelings and experiences of others, solidarity, which renders us human, becomes a principled attribute. Empathy can foster individualization or a group-specific collectivization of emotion, but may not necessarily extend to broader social issues. It is in the recognition of the other's needs that politics begin, a process that also plays a vital role in art.

Feminists cannot only focus on gender, just as socialists cannot focus exclusively on social class relations. While contemporary leftist politics that deal with commonalities do not require uniformity in their political ranks, they must stress multi-solidarity. Being a member of the anti-racist struggle should make it easier to have a feminist perspective on racism, to tie the fists of homophobia, and believe a clearly defined boundary will always exist between rich and poor. Multi-solidarity means that although one may most feel at home in one of the social

movements, one must also bring in other perspectives. Even Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci realized this when he claimed that the Left needs to incorporate new social movements regardless of their transient ideological status (Gramsci 1971). The price for not including the new social movements together with the old is reaction, and ultimately fascism, as the dominant classes and their representatives feel their interests threatened by such movements.

Multi-solidarity is inspiring, not divisive. It forces us to cooperate with one another across borders and not at the expense of each other. Giving priority to class struggle used by the early labor movement as an argument against addressing women's specific demands for action. It was declared at the time that the two main divisions, class and gender, would not be able to coexist and that class struggle must always take precedence over women's struggle. Not until the 1970s did socialist feminists dare to question this and join the two concepts by a new slogan: "No class struggle without women's struggle, not a women's struggle without class struggle." Multi-solidarity encourages multiple parallel perspectives. The one form of discrimination recognizes the others, and then elevates the thoughts and commitments of the first to a larger social movement in which political questions are voiced and negotiated. Freedom requires interpersonal solidarity, ethical action, meaningful work, cultural awareness, and shared prosperity. People can only be free together, not in isolation.

The iconic power of the Cuban Revolution assumes the same kind of fans as cultural theorist Wayne Koestenbaum has characterized in his work on Jackie Kennedy and Maria Callas (Koestenbaum 1993, 1995, 2000). The worship of these icons can be puzzling, but it can also release the yearning for another life among worshipers. The Cubans had considerable success in developing a musical culture to accompany the Revolution. Emotional experiences are amplified and have legitimacy when they are shared with others, enabling us to do things we could not have done on our own. One way to accomplish this is to gather around common symbols. Film scholar Richard Dyer points out that entertainment "presents, head-on as it were, what utopia would feel like rather than how it would be organized. It thus works at the level of sensibility, by which I mean an affective code that is characteristic of, and largely specific to, a given mode of cultural production" (Dyer 1992/2002: 20). Briefly stated, *Hasta siempre* makes me *feel* the revolution.

There are certainly many important things I have forgotten over my life's course, memories that need to be acknowledged and reflected upon. These memories are no coincidences, Freud would say, they are my forgotten self singing to me. Embarrassing, perhaps. But Reik's memory of two lines of a childhood song while writing *The Haunting Melody* is comforting. He recalled a refrain that seemed to echo the final quest of Odysseus, another male hero, who, setting forth with his oar on his shoulder, mirrored Reik's own psychoanalysis: "Wo man singt, da lass dich ruhig nieder, böse Menschen haben keine Lieder" (Find a place where

there are people singing: that's where you can settle down at ease. Nasty people don't sing songs) (Reik 1953: 145).

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Degrees of Intersectionality:
Male Rap Artists in Sweden Negotiating Class, Race and Gender

By Kalle Berggren

Abstract

"Intersectionality" has become a highly influential concept in gender research over the last 25 years. Debates have focused on differences and power asymmetries *between women*, in terms of race but also addressing class, age, sexuality, ability and nation. However, intersectional paradigms have been used to a much lesser extent in gender studies on men. This article seeks to contribute to an emerging discussion about intersectionality and masculinity by analyzing rap lyrics in Swedish songs. The data consists of a broad sample of rap lyrics by male artists 1991-2011, which is analyzed through poststructuralist discourse analysis and queer phenomenology. The analysis shows how classed discourses can be described in terms of orientation and flow, how racialization is articulated in terms of place, and the role of normative notions of gender and sexuality in anti-racist discourses. It is argued that this interconnectedness – class being related to race, which in turn is profoundly gendered – is neither well captured by the prevailing notion of "masculinities" in gender studies on men, nor by the "constitution" vs. "addition" dichotomy in intersectionality debates. Instead, it is suggested that *degrees of intersectionality* might be a more fruitful way of theorizing intersectionality in relation to men.

Keywords: Intersectionality, hip hop, rap lyrics, men and masculinities, racialization, class, queer phenomenology, Sweden.

Introduction: "True Mommy's Fag Cowards"

he is paid to arrest criminals	han får betalt för att gripa kriminella
but harasses poor workers who are nice	men trakasserar fattiga knegare som är snälla
[…]	[…]
ainaziz [cops] are true mommy's fag cowards	ainaziz är riktiga mammas bög bangare
see me downtown and label me a dealer	ser mig i centrum och stämplar mig som langare
all guys in the block are not criminals	alla grabbar i betongen är inte kriminella
but if you mess with us we'll strike back	men jiddrar ni med oss så kommer det att smälla

(The Latin Kings, "Ainaziz", 2000)

Race, gender and class have been prominent themes in Swedish hip hop since its public breakthrough in the mid-1990s. In their 2000 hit "Ainaziz", the pioneering group The Latin Kings challenged the institutional racism of the Swedish police force a decade before it appeared in national news broadcasts, following the release of a film sequence where police officers described non-white young men as "fucking monkeys" (Stiernstedt 2009). The lyrics critically describe how police officers come to the racialized *förort* (literally "suburb", but commonly used to refer to urban spaces dominated by non-white Swedes), harassing decent but poor workers and treating them as drug dealers and criminals. Class and race intersect here, but also gender. The anti-racist counter-discourse draws on established elements of heteromasculinity: a disposition towards violence is displayed in conjunction with the abject figures of the mommy's boy, the faggot and the coward. Ironically, the anti-racist critique of the police is thus itself policing the boundaries of gender and sexuality.

This interconnectedness of class, race and gender calls for an intersectional analysis of how different categories or dimensions of power are intertwined. Yet, while intersectionality has become a central concept in gender research, its status within gender studies on men is still rather unclear. Similarly, while race and gender have been explored in hip hop studies in the USA, hip hop research in other contexts has been less concerned with issues of gender and intersectionality. In this article I try to address this gap in the research by conducting an intersectional discourse analysis of rap lyrics. My approach is grounded in intersectionality theory, queer phenomenology, and poststructuralist discourse analysis, and the data consists of Swedish rap lyrics. I argue that drawing on intersectionality theory in studying men can move us beyond some problematic aspects imbued in the concept of "masculinities", while a focus on men also entails rethinking the "additive" vs. "constitutive" dichotomy in intersectionality debates, in favor of a notion of *degrees of intersectionality*.

Intersectionality in Hip Hop Studies

Hip hop has grown into a worldwide genre of popular culture in recent decades. Research now covers many aspects of hip hop culture and expressions in a variety of contexts. Questions about gender, race and intersectionality have primarily been addressed in the USA. In her influential article on intersectionality, Crenshaw analyzed the public debate on obscenity charges against rap artists, arguing against reductive analysis of hip hop that limits attention to *either* race *or* gender (Crenshaw 1991). Similarly, Rose addressed both the politics of race and questions of gender and sexuality in her pioneering study of hip hop culture (Rose 1994). Questions about the roles and status of women and men and the importance of hip hop culture for black communities have remained central to US *hip hop studies* (e.g. Hill Collins 2006; Pough et al. 2007; Jeffries 2011). International hip hop research, however, has been more concerned with questions about local adaptations of hip hop as an international genre, and with sociolinguistic aspects, such as rap artists' abilities in "code-switching" among multiple languages (Mitchell 2001; Basu & Lemelle 2006; Alim, Ibrahim & Pennycook 2009; Terkourafi 2010). Although racial or ethnic aspects are often addressed in their shifting contexts, questions of gender and/or intersectionality have been given limited attention in the international hip hop literature available in English.

In hip hop research in the Nordic countries, topics such as music production and local-global relations have been explored (Krogh & Stougaard Pedersen 2008). In Sweden, hip hop has primarily been analyzed in terms of informal learning, popular education and postcolonial criticism, and has been studied with the use of ethnographic methods (Sernhede & Söderman 2010, 2012). While hip hop research in Sweden has not focused primarily on gender, research on gender and popular music in Sweden has focused on other genres than hip hop (Ganetz et al. 2009). An exception is Bredström and Dahlstedt's article on the intersections of gender and ethnicity in the public reception of Swedish hip hop (Bredström & Dahlstedt 2002). The present article expands their focus on race and masculinity, while more explicitly addressing intersectionality in relation to masculinity theory.

An Intersectional Approach to Masculinity

While the concept of intersectionality has been very influential in many areas of gender research, it has been comparatively little discussed in relation to gender studies on men. For instance, Beasley criticizes the "still overwhelming whiteness of Masculinity Studies" and Bilge makes an attempt at "smuggling intersectionality into the study of masculinity" (Beasley 2005: 220; Bilge 2009). Conversely, intersectional studies encompassing black men do not always engage with the literature on masculinity (e.g. Wright 2004). Consequently, Lewis speaks of "the

absence of men and masculinities in the intersectionality literature and the impoverishment of theory and research for both intersectionality scholarship *and* that on men" (Lewis 2009: 209 original emphasis). In this section, I will first discuss some of the drawbacks of the most influential conceptualization of multiple power asymmetries in relation to men, Connell's theory of "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). Then, I will present how I instead make use of intersectionality in studying men.

Connell's adaptation of Gramscian hegemony theory has long been the most influential theory of masculinity (e.g. Hearn et al. 2012). Its popularity is largely due to its combination of a clear take on men's power and its recognition of differences between men. Although there has been much critical discussion of Connell's theory, intersectionality has not been at the center of these debates (e.g. Beasley 2008; Demetriou 2001; Wetherell & Edley 1999). How does the question of multiple and intersecting social divisions figure in this theory? Connell proposes that there is not just masculinity, but masculinit*ies*. Her model differentiates between a dominant patriarchal "hegemonic masculinity" and a less explicit "complicit masculinity". Furthermore, sexual minorities are described in terms of a "subordinated masculinity", while the category "marginalized masculinity" encompasses men facing racial and/or class discrimination. Compared to earlier, more unified theories of masculinity, Connell's theory has opened up a space for examining power not only between genders, but also considering other differences and power hierarchies. A problem with this conceptualization, however, is that the suggested categories of "hegemonic", "subordinated" and "marginalized" masculinities seem to imply a sense of mutual exclusivity. This can make it difficult to give an account of men who are, for instance, both gay and sexist, both patriarchal and racialized, or both working class and queer. If intersecting categories of belonging are acknowledged within this framework, we are left to describe a black gay sexist man in the somewhat clumsy terms "marginalized and subordinated hegemonic masculinity", collapsing the very categories used to describe difference in the first place. Furthermore, in their revisiting of the theory, Connell and Messerschmidt describe racialized and sexist men in terms of the psychoanalytic concept of "protest masculinity" rather than the more consistent construct "marginalized and hegemonic masculinity" (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). However, this only raises the question of why accounting for this particular group of men should require psychoanalysis when other men are analyzed with a complex sociological theory. In short, while Connell's theory usefully opened up a space for thinking about multiple power asymmetries in relation to men, her conceptualization nevertheless runs into problems in accounting effectively for intersecting identities.

There is, however, solid work on men from broadly intersectional perspectives, some of which are inspired by Connell. Topics addressed include social work, crime, schooling, fatherhood and feminism (Pringle 1995; Messerschmidt 1997;

Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman 2002; Gavanas 2004; Pascoe 2007; Hurtado & Sinha 2008). There is also some work on ethnicity and masculinity in Sweden (e.g. Jonsson 2007; León Rosales 2010). There has been less theoretical and conceptual discussion on intersectionality in relation to masculinity, though, and when this has been done it has sometimes been in a way that downplays its inherent race critical potential (e.g. Hearn 2011). I understand "intersectionality" to be a key concept for approaches that critically address multiple and intersecting power asymmetries, and which stems primarily from race-critical approaches to gender in different contexts, including US black feminism, postcolonial feminism, and theorization of gender and racialization in Europe (e.g. Lorde 1984; Spivak 1988; Hill Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1991; Mohanty 2003; de los Reyes & Mulinari 2005; Yuval-Davis 2011). On a general level, I define an intersectional approach as acknowledging the existence of several power dimensions or social divisions. This entails a) rejecting attempts to turn any one of them into a master category such as Patriarchy or Capitalism, b) acknowledging that there is some "specificity" to social divisions in that they cannot simply be collapsed into one another, while at the same time, c) it is not possible to isolate in advance any category for separate study, since any social division intersects with the others.

If these aspects can be said to summarize what intersectional approaches have in common, there have been varying ways of accounting for their differences (Makkonen 2002; McCall 2005; Hancock 2007). I would suggest distinguishing between three aspects here, namely what I call "ownership", "constitution", and "power". The "ownership" dimension refers to whether intersectionality belongs primarily to race-critical feminisms (focusing on race and gender), or to feminist research in general (focusing on gender in conjunction with any other category of inequality). "Constitution" is about whether intersectionality denotes a specific amount of interconnectedness between categories (as opposed to "additive" approaches) or if instead it is about not excluding central power dimensions from analysis (as opposed to mono-categorical approaches). "Power", finally, indicates differences ranging from structural analysis, via a notion of different ontological grounds, to deconstructive methodologies. While acknowledging that categories such as age and ability should also merit scholarly attention, in this article I nevertheless focus on the classic dimensions: class, race, gender and sexuality. I treat intersectionality more as an urge to ask critical questions about these inequalities than as a specific quality of their interconnectedness, but will return to the question of "degrees of intersectionality". In terms of power, I work with a poststructuralist approach:

> On the one hand, one of the insights of post-structuralism is that identity categories (gender, "race", etc.) cannot be understood in an essentialist way, but at the same time the power effects generated by these categories are profoundly inscribed in historical and societal terms and […] form the basis for the hierarchisation of groups and the formation of unequal social relations. (Lutz, Herrera Vivar & Supik 2011: 8)

Discourse Analysis of Rap Lyrics

The analysis in this article is based on a broad sample of Swedish rap lyrics including about 40 artists from 1991 to 2011. The data thus covers the first two decades of publically known hip hop in Sweden, including the public breakthrough in the 1990s, the boom around 2000, and the more diversified character of recent years. Artists have been selected to ensure diversity – in terms of discourses and articulated subject positions but also regarding temporal and geographical distribution. However, the analysis does not aim to map discourses onto specific artists or time of appearance, but rather treats the lyrics as a web of discourse where intersecting identities are performed, negotiated, reproduced, subverted and challenged. There has been little discussion on the pairing of intersectionality and discourse analysis, despite some of the classical intersectional analyses having a discourse analytic character (Spivak 1981; Mohanty 1988). In my view, a poststructuralist approach to discourse analysis fits best with intersectionality, since it recognizes both that power is central (which is not always the case in Discursive Psychology), and that power is complex and shifting (as opposed to the dominant vs. dominated group assumption underpinning Critical Discourse Analysis) (Baxter 2003). Developing a Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA), Baxter argues that a poststructuralist approach can still make use of tools from different traditions of discourse analysis (Baxter 2008).

Hence, I have drawn on some of Fairclough's practical suggestions for conducting discourse analysis (Fairclough 1992: 230). Thus, the lyrics have been collected, transcribed and analyzed in a two-step procedure. In the first step I code songs, verses and expressions in broad categories, looking for how different power dimensions are created, sustained and challenged. Since gender turned out to be highly significant in the data, artists culturally recognized as "male" and "female" have been analyzed separately. This article thus draws on the material coded as being about class, racialization and (male) masculinity. In the second stage I analyze a selection of extracts more closely. Here I draw on Ahmed's poststructuralist (or queer) reading of phenomenology, which adds a spatial understanding of how bodies inhabit space, and which sees discursive and bodily dimensions as intertwined (Ahmed 2006, 2010).

Song lyrics represent a special kind of material for discourse analysis since lyrics are made to be performed (Frith 1996). As Frith points out: "Take them out of their performed context, and they either seem to have no musical qualities at all, or else to have such obvious ones as to be silly" (Frith 1996: 182). Further losses are introduced through translation, where rhythm and rhyming are inevitably compromised. Thus, I cannot claim to do justice to the artistic qualities of the lyrics I offer in transcribed and translated form, although original lyrics in Swedish have been included, where applicable, to increase transparency. All analysis has been done on the original lyrics to avoid translations impacting on the analysis.

Despite these reservations, the content of rap lyrics is still a useful source of research material, as evidenced by the large number of sociolinguistic analyses of rap lyrics (Alim et al. 2009; Terkourafi 2010).

In the following sections, I will offer a step-by-step analysis of some examples of constructions of class, race and gender in my sample, in order to demonstrate how they are interconnected but still have some degree of specificity. First, I analyze discourses of class, including politics, and the part played by race in these constructions. Then, racialized discourses are considered, particularly emphasizing place, which shows how racial discourse intersects with gender and sexuality. In the concluding section, these threads are drawn together, underscoring the advantages of intersectional analysis, compared to the standard "masculinities" conceptualization.

Flow as a Phenomenology of Class

we should be affirming, not holding back […]	vi bör bejaka, inte hålla tillbaka […]
want the nation to take care but without restraint […]	vill ha ett land som tar hand om utan att hålla fast […]
if you're enterprising, come on and run something […]	om du är driftig, kom igen och driv nåt […]
if you have the will, you will succeed	om du har viljan så kommer du att bli nåt

(Crafoord, Schmidt & Talvik, "Flyter", 2010)

It is not unusual that class questions are addressed in relation to politics in my sample (which is not to say that other power dimensions are not political). This song, "Flyter" (*Flowing*), was composed by the two white male rap artists, Wille Crafoord, formerly of the pioneering group Just D, and Mange Schmidt (together with singer/songwriter Sofia Talvik) as part of the 2010 election campaign for the conservative-liberal party *Moderaterna*. The lyrics promote common tropes of neo-liberal politics: the welfare state should not "hold back" people through regulations, but instead encourage individuals' spontaneous entrepreneurialism. Success is understood as an effect of will, implying that allocation of status and wealth is dependent on individual characteristics rather than influenced by structures of privilege and oppression. The chorus continues:

if it flows – let it flow	om det flyter – låt det flyta
if it works – let it work	om det funkar – låt det funka
(ibid.)	

What works should be allowed to work and should not be restrained by regulations; what flows should be allowed to flow without interruption. Ahmed interrogates the notion of flow, popularized by best-selling psychologist Csíkszentmihályi (Ahmed 2010: 12). While flow is often thought of as a mental state when

things seem to work by themselves, Ahmed suggests we should think of flow in terms of bodies inhabiting space. Contrasting Fanon's description of the black body experiencing restriction and blockage to Merleau-Ponty's "successful" body phenomenology, Ahmed argues that the capacity to extend into space, to flow, is connected to bodily forms of privilege (Ahmed 2006: 139):

> What if to flow into the world is not simply understood as a psychological attribute? What if the world "houses" some bodies more than others, such that some bodies do not experience that world as resistant? (Ahmed 2010: 12)

While Ahmed is primarily concerned with race, gender and sexuality, I suggest that it might also be useful to think of class in those terms. Flow could be considered an experience of the "entrepreneurial" position, whose inhabitance requires a certain amount of material and embodied forms of capital (Bourdieu 1984). The pro-flow position can usefully be juxtaposed with Fjärde världen's (*The fourth world*) class critique:

working class, we're stuck here, poorly paid […]	arbetarklass, vi är fast här, får kass betalt […]
all I hear is the right going on about everybody's got a free choice	allt jag hör är högern snacka om att alla har ett fritt val
but your choice has different conditions than my choice	men ditt val har andra förutsättningar än mitt val
you walk in daddy's footsteps, sure I can too	du går i pappas fotspår, visst det kan jag göra med
you'll end up in the stock market, I'll go to jail, can you hear me?	du hamnar på börsen, jag på kåken, vill du höra mer?
am I destroying your nice plan about the individual's free choice?	förstör jag er fina plan om individens fria val?
I'd like to hear something that's not just about rich kids	vill höra nåt som inte bara inbegriper rika barn

(Fjärde världen, "Fri", 2004)

The starting point of this song is not so much a view from nowhere, but the situated experience of a "working class" position: poorly paid and a sense of being "stuck" – as opposed to the experience of flow. This extract explicitly questions the ideology of the free choice of the individual by invoking working-class experiences, which are portrayed as a "subaltern" knowledge that can hardly be heard ("all I *hear* is the right going on…", "can you *hear* me?", "I'd like to *hear* something…") (Spivak 1988). The class critique interestingly addresses both economic exploitation ("poorly paid"), and embodied class dispositions, which Bourdieu calls "habitus". Offering a more elaborated phenomenology than Bourdieu, Ahmed discusses *orientation* (Ahmed 2006). Bodies are orientated towards some things more than others so that some objects are within reach, while others are not. In this sense, our orientations inform our actions, whether they appear as "choices" or not. In being oriented, we follow paths or lines:

> Lines are both created by being followed and are followed by being created. The lines that direct us, as lines of thought as well as lines of motion, are in this way performative: they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, of routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition. (Ahmed 2006: 16)

In this way, we can understand the class critique of the different paths implied in "following in daddy's footsteps". One route leads to the wealth and privilege of the stock market, while the other leads to jail. It is not so much about the free choice of the individual as about how bodies are directed and oriented in class terms. While a discourse of flow permeates the party campaign song "Flyter", it is certainly not uncontradicted in Swedish rap lyrics more generally, as seen in the class phenomenology at work in "Fri". However, the flow discourse is not only about class:

build a mosque, baby	bygg en moské, baby
build three if you like, baby	bygg gärna tre, baby
don't let anybody crush your idea, baby	låt ingen annan krossa din idé, baby

(Crafoord, Schmidt & Talvik, "Flyter", 2010)

The only concrete case addressed in "Flyter" is interestingly an invitation to build mosques. Inviting the construction of mosques supposedly affirms diversity, and also constructs the subject as tolerant. Yet, we should also ask: why is it that the building of mosques figures as the ultimate sign of tolerance? According to Brown, the positive spirit of the concept of "tolerance" often conceals that it is usually only what is unwanted that can be tolerated (Brown 2006). Thus, while the flow discourse posits success as an effect of individual will, the mosque example suggests that some wills and "ideas" are more vulnerable to becoming "crushed" than others. It seems to invoke the vulnerability of Muslims as Europe's racialized Others, who are often constructed as alien in popular discourse. However, this is coupled with the use of "baby", an expression that could be interpreted as a slightly patronizing form of address. In this way, flow is extended even to that which is seen as most alien. Paradoxically, though, the very possibility of extending flow to a project commonly associated with non-whiteness betrays that this project was already outside the stream of flows, and by implication that the experience of flow already belongs to the inhabitance of privilege, in this case whiteness (i.e. the privileged position in race relations, see Hübinette et al. 2012).

Orientations Towards Social Democracy

Despite its circulation in society, the flow discourse is definitely outnumbered in Swedish hip hop by various critiques of societal inequalities. In these critiques, the historically dominant Social Democratic party is frequently addressed.

Mr Prime Minister, you must know	herr statsminister, ni måste ju vara medveten att
the evil president of the USA [G.W. Bush]	den ondskefulla presidenten av USA
doesn't give a shit about you and me	skiter i du och jag
he is the great-grandchild of the Ku Klux Klan	han är Ku Klux Klans barnbarnbarn
[…]	[…]
the fascist business that he's representing	den fascistverksamheten som han representerar
you know, you've met and discussed	du vet, du har ju träffat honom, hängt och diskuterat
did you enjoy it? (huh?) what did you conclude?	hade ni trevligt? (va?) kom ni fram till nåt vettigt?
can I come along next time, that would've been great? […]	får man hänga på nästa gång, det hade varit så mäktigt? […]
if you're the leader, lead us right	om du är ledaren, led oss rätt
too many roads in the world lead us astray	för många vägar i världen leder oss fel och snett

(Timbuktu, "Ett brev", 2003)

Timbuktu's "Ett brev" (*A letter*) takes the form of a letter to the then prime minister, Social Democrat Göran Persson. The lyrics critique topics such as the increased racism in Europe, criminalization of drugs, and as seen in this excerpt, US global power. While critical, the letter format requests a dialogue (to which the Social Democrats replied), and the tone also expresses a certain admiration for power ("if you are the leader, lead us right"). This is in stark contrast to the anarchism of LoopTroop's early "Jag sköt Palme" (*I shot Palme*):

one man lost his life and we have a national scandal	en man miste livet och det blir nationsskandal
ok he won a couple of elections, but people die in thousands	ok han vann några val, men folk dör i tusental
due to immoral weapons sales	på grund av vapenaffärer gjorda utan moral
a politician is slick but also replaceable	en politiker är hal men även utbytbar
just new personnel for them, who run the country	bara ny personal för dom som styr landet
a new arsenal for them, who run the business	en ny arsenal för dom som står för handeln
[…]	[…]
no matter what party, same shit, ruling elite	oavsett parti, samma skit, styrande elit
[…]	[…]
I shot Palme, now I'm out for Persson	jag sköt Palme, nu är jag ute efter Persson

(LoopTroop, "Jag sköt Palme", 1998/2001)

Here, the Social Democratic party, with its leaders Palme and Persson, is described as just replaceable marionettes in a capitalist system run by industry. The

death of "one man" is rhetorically contrasted to the death of "thousands" as a result of the Swedish export of weapons, and party politics is cast as a theater that the ruling elites put in place just for show. It is clear that male rap artists in Sweden give voice to a variety of political views, ranging from the flow discourse via a dialogue with power, to an uncompromising anarchism. I would like to contrast this anarchist position with the following account:

this is for the country of Sweden	denna e till Svea Rike land
who reached out for my family (*thank-you-very-much*)	som sträckte ut min familj en hand (*thank-you-very-much*)
when I moved from Chile to Malmö	när jag flyttade från Chile till Malmö
big applause for Olof Palme	stora applåder till Olof Palme

(Advance Patrol, "Blågula färger", 2006, italics originally in English)

Pinochet was in London, Göran Persson doesn't give a shit (idiot)	Pinochet var i London, Göran Persson han bara skiter i (idiot)
even though Sweden has the largest Chilean colony	fast Sverige har den största chilenska kolonin

(Advance Patrol, "Åsiktsfrihet", 2003)

Here we see a diasporic perspective on social democracy in Sweden. The role played by Palme in international politics is praised, particularly in relation to Sweden's policies at the time of the military coup that overthrew Allende in Chile 1973. However, Persson is not seen as fulfilling Palme's politics, as he did not confront the UK's sheltering of Pinochet. Thus, foreign policy is not seen as representing Sweden's Chilean diaspora. This example indicates that orientations towards social democracy can be shaped not only by class but also by migration and diaspora. However, while the concept of diaspora has been useful in highlighting transnational processes beyond the boundaries of nation-states, it has the drawback of being used primarily for non-whites, and thus functions to some extent as a euphemism for race: "In other words, if we draw attention to the diasporic nature of a population, does that serve as an excuse not to think of them as belonging to the settler nation, which then falls into the same trap as calling a group 'immigrant'?" (Kalra, Kaur & Hutnyk 2005: 14). In this way, one could say that race can also be a factor in shaping political orientations. If Advance Patrol's position emerges out of a non-white experience, one might speculate that LoopTroop's attack on Palme is more likely to come from a white, non-diasporic position, from which it is easier to think in class-only terms. Since class and race intersect *to varying degrees* in relation to both the flow discourse and to social democracy, class analysis must be widened to include race.

The Comforts of Racialized Place

> Despite the geographical and intellectual origin of the very concept of race in Europe, not to mention the explicitly race-based policies that characterized both its fascist regimes and its colonial empires, the continent often is marginal at best in discourses on race and racism, in particular with regard to contemporary configurations (El-Tayeb 2011:xv)

As El-Tayeb notes, the importance of race is often not acknowledged in Europe (with the exception of the UK). This sustains an image of race being an issue anywhere but in contemporary Europe. However, race is very much alive in shaping notions of who belongs to European nations, in which *non-white* Europeans are repeatedly cast as foreigners regardless of their citizenship and where they were born:

> The national often is the means by which exclusion takes place; minorities are positioned beyond the horizon of national politics, culture and history, frozen in the state of migration through the permanent designation of another, foreign national identity that allows their definition as not Danish, Spanish, Hungarian, etc. A look at various European countries indicates however that this in itself is a continentwide pattern, based on beliefs and strategies that cannot fully be explained within the national context. (El-Tayeb 2011:xx)

The importance of race is increasingly recognized in the Swedish and Nordic context by postcolonial, critical race and whiteness scholars (de los Reyes, Molina & Mulinari 2002; Mattsson 2005; Lundström 2007; Hübinette et al. 2012). Rap artists frequently address both the racialization of Swedishness and various forms of discrimination:

I'm ashamed to be Swedish	jag skäms över att vara svensk
wish it was known that I was more foreign	önskar att det var känt att jag vore mer utländsk
[---]	[---]
but believe it or not, we love Sweden	men tro det eller ej, vi älskar Sverige
we are Sweden, and we are the Swedish future	vi är Sverige, och vi är den svenska framtiden

(Advance Patrol, "Vi ladder", 2007)

Here, the non-white group Advance Patrol describes some ambivalence towards Swedishness. On the one hand, popular racism and the rise of the Sweden Democrats make them ashamed to be Swedish. On the other hand, they also challenge the racist discourse that places non-white Swedes outside of the nation, by writing themselves into the present and future of Swedishness: "we are the Swedish future". The discourse that equals whiteness and Swedishness is simultaneously resisted and resignified.

doormen asking "do you have a member's card?"	vakter som frågar "har du nåt medlemskort?"
just say you don't want me here, don't take me for an idiot	säg bara att du inte vill ha mig här, ta mig inte för idiot

(Ison & Fille, "Dum jävel", 2004)

people are struggling hard to earn a living	folk sliter hårt för att tjäna levebrödetmen ändå
still it is said that we're exploiting the system	det snackas att vi suger ut systemet

(The Latin Kings, "Rötter", 1997)

These are just a few examples of racial discrimination described in my sample, ranging from everyday racist encounters such as not being let into a club, to racialization in the labor market. The club example can perhaps also be read as a metaphor for the status of racism in contemporary Sweden: it exists on a routine basis but is often concealed, making it hard to acknowledge race as a category of durable inequality. The last extract comments on non-whites being relegated to low-paid, low-status work, which is consistent with Kamali's work on structural discrimination: "Discrimination is thus not an exception in working life, but a foundational principle for the organization, distribution and rewarding of work" (Kamali 2006: 188 my translation). It also makes visible how the discrimination faced by non-whites is returned to them as an accusation. From a psychoanalytical point of view, Kilomba describes this logic as a perverse interpretation on behalf of colonizers: "The original information – 'We are taking what is Theirs' or 'We are racist' – is denied and projected onto the 'Others': 'They come here and take what is Ours', 'They are racist'." (Kilomba 2010: 22)

Perhaps the most prominent aspect of racialization dealt with in Swedish hip hop is place. In this early song, the 1995/96 hit "Tre gringos" [*Three gringos*] by white male group Just D, the notion of "gringo" – denoting white men in foreign, particularly Latin American, territory – is drawn on when describing race and place in contemporary Sweden. Although this is an exception in a hip hop context, it nevertheless expresses a more widely circulated discourse:

we saw an ad for a cool saxophone	vi såg en annons om en schysst saxofon
and we ended up on a trip so far from home	sen blev det en tripp till så långt hemifrån
we took the blue metro line from Fridhemsplan	vi tog blå linjen nere från Fridhemsplan
it felt as if it took at least half a day [---]	det kändes som om det tog minst halva dan [---]
oh-ooh three gringos, three gringos	oh-ooh tre gringos, tre gringos
ah-aah in the suburb-jungle, in the jungle	ah-aah i förortsdjungeln, i djungeln
we ended up someplace where we felt lost	vi hade hamnat nånstans där vi kände oss lost
though there were both Konsum, McDonalds and a post office	fast det fanns både Konsum, McDonalds och post
there were strange people in weird clothes	det var konstiga människor i lustiga kläder
almost as if it the weather was warmer	och nästan som om det vart varmare väder
we were like strangers in a foreign land	som främlingar var vi i främmande land
shipwrecked, lost on a foreign shore	skeppsbrutna, vilse på främmande strand
everybody stared at us	alla stirrade på oss

(Just D, "Tre gringos", 1995/1996)

The narrative depicts how the "we", prompted by a saxophone advert (– music transcends all barriers), undertake a trip from white inner-city Stockholm (Fridhemsplan) to a racialized suburb. Research has demonstrated the convergences and contrasts of urban marginality in different contexts (Wacquant 2008). Critical race scholars in Sweden speak of a racialized geography (Molina 2005; Lundström 2007). This is clearly revealed in the song. The narrative constructs a difference between white inner-city Stockholm and the Other place. The "we" is represented as belonging to the former, which has taken on a comfortable character. Comfort, according to Ahmed, is about some bodies more than others "fitting" into certain places:

> To be orientated, or to be at home in the world, is also to feel a certain comfort: we might only notice comfort as an affect when we lose it – when we become uncomfortable. The word "comfort" suggests well-being and satisfaction, but it also suggests an ease and an easiness. (Ahmed 2006: 134)

The "we" of the song leave their white place, and at once become uncomfortable, uneasy and disoriented (feel lost, shipwrecked, stared at). Despite the similarity of grocery stores (Konsum), fast food (McDonalds) and post offices, the suburb is presented as marked by a profound difference. The trip, which in reality takes no more than 15-20 minutes, is exaggerated into "at least half a day", and the destination portrayed as "so far from home". What causes this imagined distance is apparently the otherness of the people and place: "strange people in funny clothes", "foreign land" with "warmer weather". In this way, an exoticizing discourse is established where the suburb becomes a place not quite belonging to the Swedish nation, as Molina puts it:

> It is not just a stigmatization of the people associated with these places, but that the places themselves are turned into the Other. The places are identified as "problem areas", "vulnerable areas", "segregated areas". What is expressed through these designations is that these places are not really possible to identify, they do not belong to the Swedish nation and exist in the margin. (Molina 2005: 100 my translation)

Furthermore, the suburb is described as a "jungle". Drawing upon a distinction between white civilization and wild savages, a colonial imagination is mapped onto today's racialization of people and places (Molina 2005). Thus, in "Tre gringos", we find a very clear manifestation of the Swedish racialization of people and places. A racialized discourse draws on colonial imagery and is also materialized in the allocation of housing resources along racial divides. It is in relation to this racialization that the sustained theme of place in Swedish hip hop becomes intelligible.

While the anti-racism in Swedish hip hop contains several elements, expressing affinity with one's place of belonging is prevalent. For instance, The Latin Kings named their albums "Välkommen till förorten" (*Welcome to the suburbs*) in 1994, "I skuggan av betongen" (*In the shadow of the concrete*) in 1997, and "Mitt kvarter" (*My hood*) in 2000, and today's artists include Adam *Tensta*, who takes

on the very name of his suburb. This is in line with the widespread emphasis on "representing" one's "hoods" in hip hop culture, as a response to racialized stigmatization of places (Forman 2002).

Ahmed describes how social norms become affective by being associated with happiness, which simultaneously constructs the others – women, queers and non-whites – as unhappy in various ways (Ahmed 2010). In such situations, the subordinated can sometimes advance by disavowing that which is regarded as unhappy: passing as heterosexual by not coming out, passing as white by changing names. A more thorough approach, however, involves challenging the discursive and affective distribution of happiness. For instance, LGBTQ pride marches operate by claiming happiness for that which is normatively deemed unhappy and shameful. I would argue that the insistence of many hip hop artists in Sweden on celebrating their suburbs works in a similar way. In claiming pride for their suburban belongings, they refuse to share whiteness as a "happiness-object" and see little reason to conceal or escape their racialized place of belonging. In this way, I would argue that over the last 20 years, many rap artists (but not all, as we have seen) have made a significant anti-racist intervention in the racialized geographies of contemporary Sweden.

Gender: Masculinized Resistance

We have now seen, through the song "Tre gringos", how processes of racialization shape urban place in contemporary Sweden. Through the use of colonial imagery suburbs are understood as a "jungle", which is contrasted to the white civilization. By proudly representing "the hood" in public, many rap artists refuse to accept the association between racialized suburbs and unhappiness. Consequently they have been portrayed as street-style postcolonial organic intellectuals (Sernhede 2007: 19,146). While there is some truth to this image, it might not be the whole truth. In this section, I would like to complicate the celebration of racial resistance by focusing on how discourses on gender and sexuality are drawn on when contesting racism:

the concrete jungle book, the concrete jungle book	betongdjungelboken, betongdjungelboken
get it: where I live, there's much love for the jungle	förstå att där jag bor är kärleken till djungeln stor
I'll never move away, I swear	jag flyttar aldrig härifrån jag svär
ey yo, Daddy Ayo, I'll teach them all I know	ey yo, farsan Ayo ska lära dem allt jag kan
how I live my life and how I get through	hur jag lever mitt liv, plus hur jag tar mig fram
here in the concrete jungle, it's fucking hard to find the right way [---]	här i betongdjungeln är det jävligt svårt att hitta rätt [---]
what can I say, I'm like Baloo	va fan ska man säga, jag är som Baloo
wandering straight through the jungle,	vandrar rakt igenom djungeln och spänner

flashing my claws	min klo
you can stare, I eat MCs rather than ants	ni kan glo, jag äter mc:s istället för myror
they suck like vampires	kittlar dödsskönt i kistan, dom suger som vampyrer [---]
– oh heavyweight champion	– åh, tungviktskungen
hitting my pupils, what the heck, I had to	knockar mina elever, va fan man blir ju tvungen
I didn't mean to punch them that hard…	jag menade inte att slå till dom så hårt…

(Ayo, "Betongdjungelboken", 1999)

Countering stereotypical representations can be done in several ways, according to Hall, including reversing stereotypes and promoting positive images of the sub-ordinated group (Hall 1997). A more complex strategy, however, involves elaborately playing with stereotypical representations and thereby, so to speak, contesting them from within. Thus, rather than simply rejecting the discourse on suburbs-as-jungle, in this song black male rap artist Ayo uses the stereotype for his own purposes, invoking the Disney "Jungle Book" film. This is interesting in itself, since parts of this film are broadcast each Christmas on Swedish public service television, and watching the film has almost become an attribute of Swedishness. However, while the white subjects in "Tre gringos" were lost and disoriented in the jungle, the subject here declares his love for the place and cannot imagine moving elsewhere. Comparing himself to Baloo the bear, the subject inhabits the dangerous jungle with ease. The "wild jungle" thus allows him to present himself as a competent survivor, navigating the dangers and traps. The subject possesses both knowledge and a force that allows him to occasionally knock down his pupils. Foucault notes that "discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (Foucault 1990: 101). I would argue that the racist discourse on suburbs-as-jungle is not only parodied and resignified here, but also works as such a starting-point for an opposing strategy: it becomes a resource for constructing masculinity. If the jungle is wild and dangerous, then the non-white masculine subject turns out to be its master.

yes it is true what you're saying	ja det stämmer det ni säger
I come to Sweden and steal your girls	jag kommer till Sverige och snor era tjejer

(Advance Patrol, "Blågula färger", 2006)

In this extract we see a similar strategy. Rather than rejecting the stereotype of the overly sexual black man, the stereotype is used to mock the racist accusation that immigration deprives white men of "their" women. But if such resignification is subversive in terms of race, it also provides an opportunity for constructing the subject as heterosexually successful. The articulation reinscribes cross-sex sexual conquest as a masculine virtue, and buys into a discourse where relations between

men are central, and women are used as pawns in the game between men (although a queer reading complicates the straightness of such male homosocial desire, see Berggren 2012).

ainaziz are true mommy's fag cowards
see me in the center and label me a dealer

all guys in the block are not criminals
but if you mess with us we'll strike back

(The Latin Kings, "Ainaziz", 2000)

ainaziz är riktiga mammas bög bangare
ser mig i centrum och stämplar mig som langare

alla grabbar i betongen är inte kriminella
men jiddrar ni med oss så kommer det att smälla

revenge, revenge, that's what I said [---]
shoot the racists, and the area turns red!

(Infinite Mass, "Area turns red", 1995, lyrics
originally in English)

We have seen how normative notions of gender and sexuality are reproduced when racist discourses are parodied and resignified. This also turns out to be the case when racism is combated more explicitly. In the first of these extracts, the institutional racism of the police is called into question. The repeated homogenization of young non-white men as criminals and drug dealers is exposed and challenged. However, this important anti-racist intervention is co-articulated with certain notions of gender and sexuality. First of all, the focus on the stereotype of the criminal young man rather than, for example, the stereotype of the vulnerable young woman restricted by male relatives, makes the racism described a gendered experience. Furthermore, while countering the racism of the police, the song itself polices gender. The well-known figures of the mommy's boy, the faggot and the coward are ascribed to the police in order to deprive them of their masculinity. The insult presumes that the police force is strictly male, which makes the presence of female police offers invisible. It also relies on and reinforces the norm that "masculinity" consists of heterosexuality, distancing oneself from the "feminine", and non-cowardliness, as well as the idea that deviations from this norm should be attacked. We also see a willingness to engage in violent behavior, a readiness to strike back, which is even more pronounced in the second extract. Here, racism is combated through violent revenge: "shoot the racists".

Even if we agree that (some) rap artists in some sense are postcolonial intellectuals on the street, an intersectional analysis reveals the importance of gender and sexuality to this project. The racism described and countered is largely based on masculine experiences, while the means of challenging racism frequently mobilizes elements of "masculinity" whether in playing with stereotypes or in more explicit forms of combat. Masculine norms and the policing of gender and sexuality boundaries thus serve to make this anti-racism an exclusive practice: certainly

challenging racism, but also circulating a discourse that marginalizes women and is degrading to non-normative men. To some degree, race intersects with gender and sexuality.

Degrees of Intersectionality – Beyond "Masculinities" and "Addition/Constitution"

This article has addressed negotiations about class, race and gender in Swedish rap lyrics between 1991 and 2011 by male artists. First, it was shown how discourses on class varied. They ranged from a flow discourse from a privileged position, via an anarchist critique of the ruling elites, to invoking working-class experience and perspectives. Classed discourses were not independent of discourses on race – they intersected *to varying degrees* – and the more privileged ones were shaped by the inhabitance of whiteness. Focusing on race and place in the next section, I showed how suburbs are racialized and described through colonial discourses that contrast white civilization with the jungle of the Other. Many rap artists challenge this sort of racialization by "representing" their "hoods" and thereby refusing to comply in territorial stigmatization. However, resistance against racialization is not independent of discourses on gender and sexuality – these categories intersect *to some degree*. In many cases, but not always, the challenging of racialization is co-articulated with discourses that draw on gendered experiences and police the boundaries of gender and sexuality in normative ways. This interconnectedness of class, race and gender calls for an intersectional analysis – which has not been sufficiently discussed in gender research on men. But how can we account for the way class, race and gender intersect here?

In gender studies on men, the standard way of acknowledging differences is in terms of "masculinities" in the plural. This conceptualization, however, is unfortunate in evoking an image of a plurality of different gender configurations. While this may sometimes be the case, it does not accurately describe cases where there are differences in terms of class and racial positions, but where gendered discourses more or less cut across such divides. As we have seen, there are very real differences in my sample between positions shaped by class and race, in terms of flows, orientations and comforts. At the same time, normative notions of gender and sexuality are often shared across racial and class divides. I would therefore hesitate to describe these intersections in terms of different "masculinities". This would be a conceptual move which would risk *converting differences in race and class positions into a gender difference*, as well as sustaining what Pascoe calls

> an industry of cataloguing "types" of masculinity: gay, black, Chicano, working class, middle class, Asian, gay black, gay Chicano, white working class, militarized, transnational business, New Man, negotiated, versatile, healthy, toxic, counter, and cool masculinities, among others. (Pascoe 2007: 8)

In intersectional debates, on the other hand, the question of universality and particularity is usually framed in terms of the opposition between "additive" and "constitutive" approaches. Whereas "additive" means that power dimensions can be separated or drawn together as one wishes, "constitutive" implies an entangled relationship where it is not possible to simply isolate one axis of oppression. The latter defines an intersectional approach. Let me quote from two classic texts:

> As a Black lesbian feminist comfortable with the many different ingredients of my identity, and a woman committed to racial and sexual freedom from oppression, I find I am constantly being encouraged to pluck out some one aspect of myself and present this as the meaningful whole, eclipsing or denying the other parts of self. (Lorde 1984: 11)

> Race, gender and class cannot be tagged on to each other mechanically for, as concrete social relations, they are enmeshed in each other and the particular intersections involved produce *specific effects*. (Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1983: 62, my emphasis)

Here we see how an intersectional perspective is contrasted to approaches that privilege one identity category or power dimension at the expense of a more complex understanding. While these formulations share a commitment to challenging mono-categorical analyses, there is also a difference in nuance that seems to linger on today. For Lorde, the "constitutive" or intersectional call lies primarily in acknowledging the importance of several power dimensions. For Anthias and Yuval-Davis, there is also a stronger claim involved, namely the production of specific effects. "Constitution" is thus somewhat ambiguous: it can mean refusing to disavow important dimensions, or alternatively that particular locations generate specific effects. My purpose in drawing attention to this distinction is to ask just how specific these effects are in different situations, and by implication to consider thinking in terms of *degrees of intersectionality*. Just as it has been important to challenge mono-categorical analyses for intersectional scholarship on women, when we talk about men it is perhaps equally important to resist the prevalent discourse that displaces men's oppressive gender practices onto some "Other men" (Gottzén & Jonsson 2012). It is thus of importance that we are able to account for the cases of mutual shaping as well as the instances where gender and race do not intersect to the degree that they produce specific effects – in short, we should be able to account for the varying degrees of intersectionality.

While a notion of degrees of intersectionality seems called for by the focus on men, it is also consistent with some recent conceptual discussions on intersectionality. Discussing intersectionality in relation to political science, Hancock considers the relation between categories to be an empirical question (Hancock 2007: 64). Writing from a critical realist perspective Walby, Armstrong and Strid describe the addition/constitution dichotomy as mistaken, since "the concept of mutual constitution is too simple and insufficiently ambitious to grasp the varying and uneven contribution of sets of unequal social relations to the outcome" (Walby, Armstrong & Strid 2012: 235). From a legal perspective Makkonen distin-

guishes between three forms of intersectional discrimination (in a wide sense) depending on the amount of interconnectedness (Makkonen 2002). Hence, multiple discrimination occurs when a person is discriminated against on different grounds, independently of each other, compound discrimination occurs when a person faces the combined effects of different and distinct forms of discrimination, while intersectional discrimination (in a restricted sense) takes place when it is not possible to determine on which specific ground a person was discriminated against. Other writers introduce concepts such as "saturation" and "interference" (Staunæs 2003; Moser 2006). However, I would suggest that a common thrust of these discussions is in fact an attempt to account for the varying *degrees* to which categories of inequality intersect. While we always need to be careful about geometrical metaphors, I find the notion of degrees of intersectionality helpful in avoiding the problems of lining up social divisions in terms of "masculinities" as well as the dichotomous view of "addition" vs. "constitution". Rather, inequalities shape, inform, contradict and intersect with each other to different degrees in different contexts.

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Virtue as Adventure and Excess: Intertextuality, Masculinity, and Desire in the *Twilight* Series

By Claudia Lindén

Abstract

The vampire is still primarily a literary figure. The vampires we have seen on TV and cinema in recent years are all based on literary models. The vampire is at the same time a popular cultural icon and a figure that, especially women writers, use to problematize gender, sexuality and power. As a vampire story the *Twilight* series both produces and problematizes norms in regard to gender, class and ethnicity. As the main romantic character in *Twilight,* Edward Cullen becomes interesting both as a vampire of our time and as a man. In a similar way as in the 19th century novel the terms of relationship are negotiated and like his namesake Edward Rochester, Edward Cullen has to change in important ways for the "happy ending" to take place. In spite of a strong interest in sexuality and gender norms in relation to vampires very few studies have focused exclusively on masculinity. This article examines the construction of masculinity in relation to vampirism in the *Twilight series*. It offers an interpretation of Stephenie Meyer's novels and the character of Edward as part of a broader field of feminist (re-)uses of the vampire in modern literature with its roots in the literary tradition from Austen and the Brontë-sisters as well as from classic Gothic fiction.

Keywords: *Twilight* Series, Stephenie Meyer, masculinity, vampires, werewolves, *Midnight Sun,* Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, feminist theory, queer theory, gothic.

Introduction

Virtue is no longer something you believe in,
Its seduction power is lost,
to reintroduce it one would be forced to advertise it
in a strange kind of form as adventure and excess.

Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*

In the rainy summer of 1816 in Italy, two monsters were born that ever since have been living in our popular culture: Frankenstein and the vampire. John Polidoris's *The Vampyre: A Tale*, came to being in the same ghost story pact as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* 1816 (Shelley 1985: 6). The audience associated it with Lord Byron because Polidori suggested that the inspiration for the vampire protagonist Lord Ruthven came from Byron himself (Polidori 2005: 10). This settled the image of the vampire as a noble, dark-haired and melancholic womanizer that continues his un-dead life among us even today.

The vampire is still primarily a literary figure. The vampires we have seen on TV and cinema in recent years are all based on literary models, and the amount of novels about vampires is increasing every year. Today the vampire is at the same time a popular cultural icon and a figure that, especially women writers, use to problematize gender, sexuality and power (Whisker 2009). If, as Nina Auerbach claims, "every age embraces the vampire it needs", we can ask what Edward Cullen, the romantic hero of *Twilight*, says of our time (Auerbach 1995:145)? In spite of a strong interest in sexuality and gender norms in relation to vampires very few studies have focused exclusively on masculinity. As the main romantic character in *Twilight,* Edward Cullen becomes interesting both as a vampire of our time and as a man. It is actually the fact that he is a vampire that makes him so alluring as a romantic hero. This article examines the construction of masculinity in relation to vampirism in the *Twilight series* focusing on the ways it reconfigures many traits from nineteenth century novels by women writers in relation to gender and class. It offers an interpretation of Stephenie Meyer's novels and the character of Edward as part of a broader field of feminist (re-)uses of the vampire in modern literature with its roots in the literary tradition from Austen and the Brontë-sisters as well as from classic Gothic fiction.

The vampire story affirms and challenges our culture. As someone who transgresses boundaries, breaks down categories "and upsets the very premises upon which systems of normality are structured" the vampire is by tradition also a queer figure (Kane 2010: 103). Anna Höglund points out in her cultural study of vampires that the vampire figure "seems to be particularly suitable for power improvisations." As a vampire story the *Twilight* series both produces and problematizes norms in regard to gender, class and ethnicity. Even though the plotline follows a traditional romance scheme, ending with the protagonist's marriage and a child, as in *Jane Eyre,* it is all about what happens before that "happy ending". *Twilight's* challenge to our culture lies partly in the twists and turns of the plot

itself. In a similar way as in the 19th century novel the terms of relationship are negotiated and like his namesake Edward Rochester, Edward Cullen has to change in important ways for the "happy ending" to take place. Stephenie Meyer's wildly popular but despised *Twilight Series* is, despite its love theme, also a power improvisation on the vampire figure. In this text I will suggest that even Meyer's romanticized vampire series can be read as part of a larger context of feminist rewriting of the vampire genre.

The Twilight Research and the Problem of Edward's Abstinence

The Twilight series has been hailed by readers and criticized by critics. When I wrote an article on the *Twilight* series three years ago it was still difficult to find research articles on it (Lindén 2010).[1] The only critical and academic exploration of Meyer's novels at that time were *Twilight and Philosophy, Vampires, Vegetarians, and the Pursuit of Immortality* (Housel & Wisneski 2009). During the past three years a vast field of serious, interesting research of the book series and the films as well as on the world of *Twilight* fan fiction has exploded.[2] But within those borders the interpretations differ wildly especially in regard to gender norms. Delighted readers are drawn to the *Twilight* world for multiple reasons, and Bella, Edward and Jacob become, as Yvonne Leffler puts it: "More than admired and idealized celebrities, they become close friends." (Leffler 2011: 111). Critics on the other hand criticize the flat language and what they see as moralism, sexism, and excessive abuse of adjectives.

Many writers criticize *Twilight* for being conservative, gender-reactionary, and even possibly anti-feminist or "post-feminist" in its tendency (Wilson 2011: 82; Whitton 2011; Mukherjea 2011: 70; Miller 2011: 165; Taylor 2012). The criticism is often focused on Bella's passivity and the story ending in marriage and childbirth as examples of how *Twilight* tells a story of conformity to traditional values. Anthea Taylor is typical of this view:

> why might consumers of popular fiction, and teenage girls in particular, "need" a masculine vampiric figure parasitically feeding on a heroine whose anxieties, insecurities and self-doubt immobilize her to such an extent that the only (culturally sanctioned) choices she is able to make include marriage, motherhood and a masochistic relationship whose end point is (un)death? (Taylor 2012: 43)

In contrast to this view, and at the other end of the scale of interpretations, are those researchers who, like myself, think that the novels open up to a more complex reading. As Natalie Wilson has pointed out, *Twilight* is most exhaustively examined in relation to females and femininity, since the common assumption is that the vast majority of the fans are female the phenomenon will be understood in relation to girls and women. Therefore she continues, "it is crucial to consider males and masculinity in relation to *Twilight*" (Wilson 2011: 83). In spite of this claim Wilson still sees Edward as someone inscribing traditional gender norms

rather than challenging them. Following Wilson in her emphasis on the importance of masculinity for understanding *Twilight*, but differing from her interpretation I would suggest a reading of *Twilight* as a text that actually challenges gender norms. But to be able to do so it is necessary to focus on Edward instead of Bella.

However, even though Edward naturally is discussed in many texts, only few texts in the vast field of *Twilight* research focus exclusively on Edward. In *Twilight and History* there are two articles that examine Edwards relation to his human time in early 20th century in interesting ways and to the literary references in Meyer's novels. They focus on courting rituals in Edward's time and how the *Twilight* series reflects this (Coker 2011: 77) and on Edward's relation to the concept of the Byronic hero (Cochran 2011: 14). Actually several researchers point out Edward as a Byronic hero (Myers 2009; Groper 2011; Pollack 2011), some like Meyer also showing how he deviates from that role.

A key question to understanding Edward is how one interprets his will and ability to abstain from human blood as well as sex. His abstinence is a central part of the narrative, both withholding action (sex between Edward and Bella) and driving it forward (Edwards leaving Bella, his attempted suicide, marriage, and in the end Bella becoming a vampire). Nietzsche's words in the beginning of this article of virtue advertised "as adventure and excess" seems very fitting for Edward. Edward's abstinence has even been referred to as the "erotics of abstinence" or "abstinence porn" of the series (Larsson 2011: 68). Is Edward exerting power over Bella or over himself? Most scholars find Edward's abstinence problematic on one level or another. Some see it as an expression of the traditional western Christian and philosophical mind/body split (Kärrholm 2011; Nykvist 2011). Others say, for example, that the appeal of Edward is mainly an expression of the mentality of people living in the modern consumer society. We live with our fear of aging, our forbidden craving for food, and our urge to consume. Undeniably the anorexic tendencies and the celebration of control and self-discipline of the modern vampire say something about life in the consumer culture era (Wilson 2011: 186).

A few scholars, like myself, find Edward's abstinence central for the understanding of the *Twilight* series. In "I know what I saw" Mariah Larsson investigates how Edward's abstinence opens up for Bella's activity as well as her desiring gaze, making the films into a staging of the "male pin up" as well as of an active female desiring gaze (Larsson 2011:75). In a sense the whole world of *Twifics* that is the virtual fan communities, builds on Edward's abstinence, when fans rewrite the stories to put in sex where it is not in the canon (Isaksson & Lindgren Leavenworth 2011). Another text that also center on Edwards abstinence is Sommers' and Hume's "The *Other* Edward: *Twilight's* Queer construction of the Vampire as Idealized Teenage Boyfriend" sees Edward's abstinence as queer in the sense that it makes him Other. They claim it is possible to read Edward as a

gay boyfriend, or at least as "a lonely, selfless, and self-imposed Other" (Sommers & Hume 2011: 162). In "Of Monsters and Men: Toxic Masculinity and the Twenty-first Century Vampire in the Twilight Saga" Tracy Bealer examines how Edward's abstinence changes his masculinity during the course of the series while still upholding a phallic identity through his vampirism that makes him strong and hard (Bealer 2011: 145).

Like Bealer I read Edward in relation to his abstinence, seeing how he has to change during the development of the plot. But I differ from Bealer in my interpretation of Edward's vampirism, reading him in a context of other contemporary vampires. In the same way I follow many other scholars who have pointed out the references to the canon of the 19th century novel. But since I read Austen and the Brontë sisters as part of a theoretical tradition challenging and criticizing gender norms I see these intertextual references as providing a context both of texts and of centuries of readings that challenge gender norms. The critical potential of *Twilight* lies, I suggest, in the construction of Edward's masculinity and how it changes in his relationship to Bella for his longing for marriage and family to come true. Through Edward's and Jacob's characters and the way they are pitted against each other, masculinity is reworked in relation to class, sexuality and desire.

The Vampire as a Feminist Ally

With the brooding and over-scrupulous vampire Louis in *Interview with a Vampire* Ann Rice opened up for a new kind of vampire in the 1970s (Rice 1976); the "human-vampire" who is the main character in the story. Since then, the genre has changed drastically. The modern vampire is handsome, sexy, intelligent and educated; the characteristic trait of the Byronic hero as irresistible seducer who cannot refrain from causing suffering to those who love him is not visible anymore. The Byronic trait lingers on in the vampire's solitude and melancholy brooding over a former life of evil (Pollack 2011). But loneliness also makes the lovelorn vampire anything but a horror figure. Edward Cullen is a typical modern vampire, beautiful, lonely, an ascetic romantic, anorectic "vegetarian" and an ex-monster, not only with exceptionally high moral standards, but with an outspoken ambition to be a good (human) being. Edward is dangerous, he has the strength to kill but not in a Byronic way. In fact he is rather an anti-Byronic hero "obsessed with making morally correct choices" as Jessica Groper puts it (Groper 2011: 135).

Edward is portrayed in a way that both affirms and challenges traditional masculinity. Therein lies his attraction. Admittedly, he is strong, educated, rich and supernaturally beautiful and depicted by Meyer with something close to a pornographic female gaze (Larsson 2011). However, it is not his beauty but his behavior that is interesting. Edward changes in crucial ways throughout the series. Like a certain Mr. Darcy, he must overcome his prejudice, jealousy, class complex and

will to dominate. It is telling that it is Edward that emphasizes the relationship between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* as a true love story in comparison with Cathy and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* that is Bella's preferred reading. Hela Shachar sees that "Edward's characterization in relation to both Rochester and Heathcliff reveals the *Twilight* Series' use of past ideals of gender" (Cochran 2010: 24; Shachar 2011: 157). To see these references as only past ideals of gender is to ignore how these nineteenth century novels also took part in a critique of gender, not only when they were written, but in the way they were *read* for a very long time afterwards. The critique lies in the way the hero has to change before the heroine can accept him in marriage. Meyer's open reference to the more agreeable of these nineteenth century romance heroes, Mr Darcy, also reveals how and in what way Edward has to change during the course of the novels. As Eric Silverman writes "In the end, it is the very combination of Edward's moral imperfections along with his moral aspiration that makes his story so attractive, intriguing, and compelling" (Silverman 2009: 104). That Edward is a vampire, and the way he is a vampire, are critical to Edward's ability to develop.

Nina Auerbach argues that male vampires need the woman to stage his monstrosity, making the vampire stories often "turn their demonic designs into female plots" (Auerbach 1995: 7). According to Auerbach the vampire is a feminist ally. Höglund points out young women's identification "with the vampire and its world thus prompting them to build their identity on the otherness that causes their exclusion, rather than to conform to society's normative model of femininity" (Williamson 2005: 146; Höglund 2010: 358). Gothic texts like *Twilight* can both express the anxiety of a particular time and portray an alternate reality, and thus imply a critique of the current state, even if everything returns to order at the end. William Hughes and Andrew Smith state that: "Even where conventional moralities and identities are proclaimed as ultimately triumphant in a Gothic text, the very fact that they have been challenged signifies that they have been interrogated and, if their boundaries have been tested, they have equally been contemplated" (Hughes & Smith 2009: 1).

The vampire stories' use of features from classic Gothic literature, with themes such as alienation and destabilizing of traditional gender identity, is precisely the critical potential that can make the vampire a feminist ally. Especially since masculinity and patriarchal power are problematized in the Gothic genre, which stages a "coded and veiled critique of all those public institutions that have been erected to displace, contain and commodify women," according to Diane Long Hoeveler (Hoeveler 1998: xiii). Cyndy Hendershot also notes that "masculinity as a masquerade may be articulated through Gothic texts, which frequently reveal the fragility of traditional manhood" (Hendershot 1998: 4).

The vampire's historicity is such a subversion of traditional masculinity. The vampire is always an old man, yet he is rarely anachronistic. He is changing,

adapting to the times, and thus points to masculinity's historical and constructed nature. In the vampire mythology it is often said that the vampire's personality has been difficult to change, and when it does, when he falls in love for example, it will not change. But this is contradicted by his adaptability to the time around him. Only failed vampires cling to the old. Unlike ordinary men who, according to masculinity researcher Stephen Whitehead, often do not see a profit, materially and in terms of power, in change, the vampire however understands the importance of change and adaptation to new life forms.

The vampire's age and experience also seem to make him willing to accept strong, independent women. From *Dracula* to contemporary *vampire romance*, the vampire has a special relationship with the heroine without counterpart in her relationships with human men. The vampire is often both a traditional man and a transgressor of gender norms. After a long life where much has been predictable, it is the woman's independence that stimulates the vampire's curiosity. In the vampire literature there seems to be a correlation between the heroine's degree of independence and non-traditional female behaviour and the vampire's age: For Bella, an ordinary girl with unusually great integrity, it is sufficient with a 100-year-old vampire. Charlaine Harris Sookie Stackhouse (Sookie Stackhouse's series is the basis of the TV series *True Blood*) who is a mind reader and immune to the mental tricks of vampires, starts out with a relationship with 150-year-old Bill. Then after slaying a few vampires herself, and rescuing several others she moves on to a thousand-year-old Erik. Buffy the vampire slayer has a love affair with Angel who is also over 150 years old. For Laurell K Hamilton's Anita Blake who is a necromancer, vampire killer, and cold-hearted killer of supernatural beings that do not stay in their place, it takes Jean Claude a 400-year-old French vampire to match her. And in Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's series the main character the vampire St. Germain is 3500 years old. Nina Auerbach writes that St. Germain's non-phallic thirst for intimacy "is the symptom of a despairing social critique" (Auerbach 1995: 147).

The vampire's advanced age gives him experience that makes him both free of prestige and sincerely interested in being intellectually challenged. But, perhaps most importantly, he knows what loneliness is. Many contemporary vampire stories explore loneliness, alienation and longing for a love that is both accepting and confirming. When love comes his way, he meets it with joy and gratitude, for he knows how rare it is. Edward says that waiting for love, that is, for Bella, taught him patience: "I've had a hundred years to gain it. A hundred years of waiting for her"(Meyer 2007: 497). The vampire is located oceans away from the world of soap-operas, rom coms and magazines where the man, who must be lured into a solid relationship, always longs to return to single life and life with the boys. The man Whitehead describes as "[F]or many men it is the very spontaneity of intimacy – and trust – that is so threatening and precarious" (Whitehead 2002: 174). This is not the case in the vampire world. Decades, sometimes centuries of loneli-

ness, make the vampire unusually willing to value and affirm love, often more so than the heroine. It is the vampire who wants to marry, create bonds, release latches and share psychic abilities. Edward is typical of this contemporary vampire characteristic. He, not Bella, is the one who knows it is eternal love, he is the one who wants to marry, and he is the one who wants to manifest their relationship in front of both the vampire world and the human world of Forks. All of this is Edward's desire. So what does he have to do in order to get what he wants?

Vampire, the Heroine and the Affirmation of the Other

Edward and Bella are not just vampire and human but they also have different class backgrounds, something that also links *Twilight* to the 19th century novel. There are structural similarities between the classic Gothic novel such as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* or *The Italian* and the novels of Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters and contemporary Anglo-American vampire stories like *Twilight*. In the bourgeois novel the heroine often comes from a lower class than the hero. In that way she became the bearer of an ideal of bourgeois virtues in opposition to the aristocracy's affectation and debauchery. Therefore, she is portrayed as less mannered, more unpretentious and straightforward than other women in the hero's environment – except for his sister. In Austen's novels the heroine's close relationship with the hero's sister always works as a guarantee for the man's (hidden) quality. Like Mr. Darcy and Mr. Tilney, Edward has a friendly sister, the enthusiastic Alice. When Bella and Edward are getting married Alice is the bridesmaid, and Bella calls her "my best girlfriend and soon-to-be sister" (Meyer 2008: 39). Above all, the heroine in 19th century novels has integrity. She is fearless and has the ability to see beyond the surface. In Austen's and Charlotte Brontë's novels this is shown trough the heroine's audacity to speak up to the hero, but also her ability to see his good sides below the rough surface.

In the vampire story this classic characteristic of the heroine is manifested in two ways; first through the heroine's ability to see the man in the monster rather than vice versa, and second when she, contrary to all other human beings, cannot be affected by vampire tricks. Both the vampire and the heroine meet someone who deviates from the norm – and embrace that deviation. In *Twilight* Edward can read minds, with one exception – he cannot read Bella's thoughts. It turns out then that Bella is also immune to other vampire tricks.

Bella is otherwise an ordinary girl, who never perceived herself to be beautiful, even though Edward says she is. She dresses simply in jeans and a sweater and is often without make up. Edward is drawn to Bella in the first place because her blood smells so enticing, and then later she becomes an intellectual challenge to him because he cannot read her thoughts. Bella is curious about the silent, almost aggressive guy who at one point saves her life, in a way that should not have been possible. She senses that there is something wrong with him. When she finally

approaches the truth, she has already become so interested that she cannot turn back. In the same way as Bella's blood smells particularly good to Edward, Bella finds Edward's scent unusually attractive. The only thing that is special about Bella in the beginning of the story is her lack of fear of the fact that Edward is a vampire, and her ability to see a lonely soul where all others see a disdainful and superior guy.

Part of the erotic tension in the beginning of the first novel builds up around Edward's enigma; when is Bella going to find out that he is a vampire, and what will she do when she finds out? In the beginning Bella is constructed as a detective searching for answers on the net and in books, as Larsson and Leffler have pointed out (Larsson 2011: 71; Leffler 2011: 174). She is even flirting with Jacob in order to manipulate him to give her information about the "cold ones". Finding out that he is a vampire and that he is interested in her goes hand in hand, and when the truth is revealed it becomes a confirmation of their beginning love story that Edward's vampirism no longer matters. When Bella and Edward for the first time spend a long time alone, after he saved her a second time, she confronts him with her suspicions. He admits to being a mind reader, but avoids her other questions. In the back of the car, in the dark on a lonely forest road, Bella slowly realizes that her most spectacular suspicions are justified. Although she understands that she is alone in the car with a vampire, she is not afraid. When, driven by his concern for what she really thinks of him, Edward finally asks what exactly her theory is about him, she answers that it no longer has any importance.

> "I decided it didn't matter," I whispered.
>
> "It didn't *matter*?" His tone made me look up – I had finally broken through his carefully composed mask. His face was incredulous, with just a hint of the anger I'd feared.
>
> "No," I said softly. "It doesn't matter to me what you are."
>
> A hard, mocking edge entered his voice. "You don't care if I'm a monster? If I'm not *human*?"
>
> "No." [...] (Meyer 2005: 184)

Bella here demonstrates what Gina Whisker sees as a prominent trait in the vampire story: "A mutual recognition of the Other as a subject, however similar or different" (Whisker 2009: 134). Bella does not care about *what* Edward is, but *how* he is. In the same ways as Elizabeth Bennet finally sees Mr. Darcy's personality, his goodness, under the surface of aristocracy, wealth and arrogance, Bella looks beyond Edwards "surface", the fact that he is a vampire. In the last part, *Breaking Dawn*, it is ultimately only his soul she sees:

> I imagined I could see all the way into his soul. It seemed silly that this fact – the existence of his soul – had ever been in question, even if he *was* a vampire. He had the most beautiful soul, more beautiful than his brilliant mind or his incomparable face or his glorious body (Meyer 2008: 24).

To see the "man in the monster" is such an important part of contemporary vampire stories that it is interesting to ask what this recognition signifies for our time. In the 19th century novel this recognition from the heroine did not come until after the hero had shown that he actually had changed, or was somehow different than first perceived. Elisabeth realizes that Mr Darcy is a good person when he rescues her sister Lydia from social disaster. In contemporary stories with the human-vampire this recognition of the vampire's inner goodness often take place before the beginning of the (love) story (Rice 1976; Hamilton 1993; Harris 2001; Smith 1991) The fact that the vampire is accepted in his/her otherness before s/he has actually done any good deeds could be understood in the same terms as Janice Radway meant that women accept men's masculinity in its traditional way and only want to add some important character features: "because they indicate that their reserved and cruel heroes are, in truth, compassionate and kind individuals from the start, they only pretend to explore creatively the way to ideal male-female relationships" (Radway 1984: 129).

However, Edward differs from the hero in the romance literature that Radway refers to in several important ways. According to Radway the harsh ways and ruff manners of the hero is due to earlier disappointment in love, and he is also much more sexually experienced than the heroine (Radway 1984: 130). Edward has no such experiences at all, being almost more innocent than Bella (he has not even kissed a girl before). His harshness comes from his knowledge of a discrepancy between what he is (a vampire) and what he wants to be (a good human) and his own self-loathing comes from not feeling worthy of Bella's attention. This is in direct opposition to the hero of romance literature who initially does not think the heroine worthy of his interest, since he does not believe in women any longer. In romance literature the heroine therefore needs to be innocent to save the hero back to love (Radway 1984: 130) To be non-human and be accepted for that is very different from having an inner goodness.

The vampire's definition as a non-human, rather than dead human or ex-human, is interesting. Many of the modern vampires that choose not to kill humans, like Edward or Bill in True Blood, have an outspoken ambition to keep some trace of their lost humanity. This is shown trough the choice not to kill and trough their love for the heroine. When the human, like Bella, accepts the vampire as other, that is as a non-human monster, it works as an impetus for the vampire to behave more like a human. It therefore has the function of a moral imperative in the story. Pierre Wiktorin has pointed out that: "Intentionally or not, popular culture, like the *Twilight* series, has become the basis for ethical and religious discussions" (Wiktorin 2011: 294). But *Twilight* is also "tightly bound up with the logic and discourse of consumer society" as Karin Nykvist ponts out (Nykvist 2011: 36). In *Twilight* like in so many series that have gained international success Wiktorin writes, "you are what you eat and how you behave" (Wiktorin 2011: 288). Edward has for a long time abstained from killing humans, but Bella's ac-

ceptance of him puts him to a test; can he not only abstain from killing but also love a(nother) human? The contemporary vampire story's paradoxical question is: can one both be a good consumer, that is only body and looks, and at the same time be a good Christian? Even though *Twilight* ends with Bella becoming a vampire the throbbing question throughout all four volumes is about Edwards ("human") soul. Here I disagree with Karin Nykvist who reads Bella's vampirism as a never ending body project, which in the end becomes her salvation (Nykvist 2011: 43). The "happy ending" would not be possible without Edward's "beautiful soul".

The monster produces both fear and the notion of normality, as Judith Halberstam has pointed out. Through its monstrosity, that is its non-humanity, the monster produces what is human through a discursive effect (Halberstam 1995: 45). So what is this notion of humanity that the vampire story produces? And in what sense is Edward's humanity intrinsic part of his masculinity and his attraction? In *Midnight sun*, Meyer's unfinished story from Edward's perspective that was published as a draft on her homepage 2008, he meditates on how his desire to kill Bella threatens to take away the little humanity that he has left. "In that instant I was nothing close to the human I'd once been; no trace of the shreds of humanity I managed to cloak myself in remained." (Meyer 2008b: 9) Tracy Bealer sees a connection between sexual desire and humanity in *Twilight*. "In interesting ways, the novels seem to conflate what Edward calls his 'human instincts […] buried deep, but they're there' with a conception of heterosexual desire that is not predatory and dominative but empathic." (Bealer 2011: 144) In the beginning when Edward is already interested in Bella but knows nothing of her feelings he says in *Midnight Sun*: "I was a monster. /…/ Bella could never see me the way I wished she would. Never see me as someone worthy of love. Never. Could a dead, frozen heart break?" (Meyer 2008b: 108). In the way Halberstam showed Edward the vampire produce Edward the human soul through a discursive effect when he points out that he is a monster but with a heart that can break. Besides not to kill humans, humanity seems to be the ability to love.

To Eat or Not to Eat

An important aspect of the human-vampire story is of course that the vampire does not kill people for their eating. Often, he, or she, as Edward's sisters, has killed in the past, but they do not eat people. Even Louis in *Interview with a Vampire* felt guilty about his desire for human blood and tried in periods to survive on animal blood or starve completely (Rice 1976). In those stories where vampirism is not contagious the human-vampire can use of voluntary human or synthetic blood as in *True Blood*. In the Swedish author John Ajvide Lindqvist's *Let the Right One In* (Lindqvist 2004/2007) as well as in *Twilight* the vampire infects her or his victim with the first bite. In *Twilight* voluntary feeding on humans is there-

fore not an option and the Cullen family call themselves jokingly for "vegetari-ans" because they only eat animals.

Along with the rest of his "family" Edward belongs to a group of vampires who voluntarily renounced killing. "I do not want to be a monster," Edward de-clares to Bella (Meyer 2005: 186 p.). Carlisle Cullen, Edward's father and creator, was the son of a clergyman, and has devoted his eternal life to rescuing and caring for people in his capacity as physician. Overall the Cullens cultivate a humanitari-an, non-violent lifestyle, loyalty and commitment to the family in direct contrast to other vampires. The Cullens' lifestyle could be interpreted as a rejection of tra-ditional, violent masculinity. But it lasts only until the hostile vampires show up. Then violence, in a way that we recognize from American popular culture, both becomes legitimate and a necessity to defend the family and they all turn into veritable death machines. The violence of the vampires is an example of what Whitehead calls "a discourse that is particularly powerful in that it serves to legit-imize male violence as voyeuristic entertainment" (Whitehead 2002: 38). Alt-hough female vampires and werewolves fight just as well as men, violence is por-trayed as a fun game for men. It must have something to do with the Y chromo-some, Bella says to herself, and thereby confirms the link between masculinity and violence (Meyer 2007).

The vampire's self-discipline when it comes to controlling his or her hunger is however an important aspect of today's vampire stories. A human-vampire can always check their hunger if required, sometimes to the extent that the conse-quences are harmful for the vampire himself. Stefan in *The Vampire Diaries* starves himself so that he becomes very weak and cannot defend himself against his ill-natured brother. When Bella is sick and pregnant and Edward does not dare to leave her, he abstains from hunting for so long that he gets all washed out and hollow-eyed. There is a long tradition of interpreting the vampire's bite as an analogy to sexuality, but as Anna Höglund notes, sexuality is no longer hidden, but openly described in contemporary vampire stories. It is food and eating that is the main problem for the modern vampire, not sexuality. Several human-vampires have "developed apparent eating disorders" Höglund writes (Höglund 2009: 335).

Anna Höglund makes an interesting connection between the vampire's asceti-cism and eating disorders and our position in the consumer society, when she points out that the vampire's control of eating echoes of our culture's fear of los-ing control of body weight, appearance and age. But the vampire story's ascetic vampire also offers something else: "In the vampire story, what is characteristic of love as it should be is that it is free from consumer culture demand for the perfect surface" (Höglund 2009: 365). In its focus on love that goes beyond the surface the contemporary vampire story mixes a critique of consumer society with traces from the 19th century novel's demand for gender equality in a notion of love as an equal meeting between two souls. Edward's transformation of his desire to eat Bella to his desire to love Bella is the point where those two discourses meet.

Edward's Restrained Sexuality

Edward controls not only his hunger but also his sexuality. Throughout three books Edward refuses to have sex with Bella. In the beginning it is because he is afraid he will bite her, or hurt her by mistake. Later on it is ultimately because of his wish to marry her first. All to Bella's rising frustration: "you are bizarrely moral for a vampire" (Meyer 2007: 536).

The restrained sexuality in *Twilight* has been much discussed as mentioned earlier (Diamond 2011: 45; Donelly 2011: 182; Larsson 2011: 69). It is often perceived as a moral issue and linked to Meyer's background as a Mormon. But in many ways *Twilight* echoes the same kind of criticism of human sexuality as we find in the much more explicit *True Blood*. The humans are often more perverted in their sexuality and are looked down upon by the vampires. This is very clear both in the books and in the TV show. Overall, uncontrolled excess is problematic for the contemporary vampire. Bella's male classmates, and Jacob are trapped in their unconscious desire in a completely different way than Edward. It is no longer the vampire that stands for perverted sexuality but man. The modern vampire man, writes Höglund, "has been transformed from ruthless womanizer with a taste for violent and perverted sex, to an ascetic romantic who thirsts for intimacy and true, genuine love." (Höglund 2009: 333)

One of the reasons for *Twilight's* attraction is that Edward's restrained sexuality offers the teenage girl Bella the possibility to experience her desires and her longing in a permissive way. Bonnie Mann writes that Meyer offers teenage girls "stories of male accountability and female pleasure without penalty" (Mann 2009: 140). The books are narrated in the first person and Bella's desire, or rather her body's reactions to Edward's kissing and touching are described from her point of view. She gets dizzy, has heart palpitations, gets hot, flushed and panting. Edward is just as inexperienced as Bella (here he definitely differs from other vampires!) and her reactions, as well as his own, are as new and surprising for him as for her. When they kiss her for the first time, they are both overwhelmed by her strong erotic response:

> "I was thinking there was something I wanted to try." And he took my face in his hands again.
>
> I could not breathe. [...] And then his cold marble lips pressed against mine.
>
> What neither of us was prepared for was my response. Blood boiled under my skin, burned in my lips. My breath came in wild gaps. My fingers knotted in his hair, clutching him to me. My lips parted as I breathed in his heady scent. Immediately I felt him turn to unresponsive stone beneath my lips. His hands gently, but with irresistible force, pushed my face back. I opened my eyes and saw his guarded expression. "Oops," I breathed.
>
> "That's an understatement." (Meyer 2005)

This scene establishes what turns out be a recurring pattern between them. It is always Bella who wants more, who is swept away, and it is always Edward who

says no. Although it is Edward who draws the line, Bella is never morally re-proached for her desire. Not even the underlying religious ethic that it is better to wait with sex until after marriage, applies to Bella. Even Bella's dad takes for granted that they will have sex with each other. Sex is also the only human experience Bella does not want to miss before she becomes a vampire. It is not for the sake of her virtue they should wait, it is because of *his*. It is Edward, seventeen in 1918, who worries about his soul's immortality. Sex before marriage is the only taboo he has not broken.

The fact that Edward is a vampire with his particularly strong desire for Bella's blood allows Meyer to construct a man who wants nothing more than to marry, who is very responsible and manages to avoid anything beyond kissing – but whose eyes are black, and whose voice is hoarse of suppressed desire. Especially in the first books one gets the impression that in intimate situations with Bella, Edward is on the verge of losing control all the time. Edward's way of saying that he cannot have sex with Bella because he dares not lose control with her, also suggests that Edward has a wild and violent side that he just barely controls.

Edward's fear of his own sexuality is implicitly hinted at in *Midnight Sun*. Right after meeting Bella, Edward flees from Forks to Tanya and her sisters, the other "vegetarian" family of vampires. Tanya tries to seduce him and when he says no she mockingly shows him, through her thoughts, memories of sex with human men. Her choice not to kill humans is also connected to her love of human men: "Unlike Carlisle, Tanya and her sisters had discovered their consciences slowly. In the end it was heir fondness for human men that turned the sisters against slaughter. Now the men they loved…lived" (Meyer 2008b: 25). Even though *Midnight Sun* is written after the whole *Twilight* series, it is interesting to learn that according to this text Edward knows already from the beginning that vampires can have sex with humans without killing them. So his fear of having sex with Bella seems to be a more personal fear of his own sexuality than of the risk that he could kill her!

Masculinity and Self-control in the *Twilight* Series

Edward's self-control over his desire to eat Bella and / or to give in to Bella's lust is the point where *Twilight's* different levels of being at the same time gender-traditional *and* feminist intersect. As mentioned earlier, hunger and sexuality are *not* exchangeable in the contemporary vampire story. Control of hunger and sexuality therefore becomes the intersection where Edward can manifest a classic masculinity and simultaneously problematize contemporary discourses of masculinity. Edward's refusal to have sex leads Bella to ask with suspicion if he really is attracted to her "in *that* way?" This makes Edward jump to defend his heterosexuality over his humanity: "I may not be a human, but I am a man" (Meyer 2005: 311, my emphasis). A strangely queer statement that undermines more than it se-

cures, when it suggests that human and man are not necessarily the same thing. Edward's unwillingness to have sex makes him deviate from a contemporary image that often conflates masculinity with constant interest in sex.

During the nineteenth century there came a tendency to "emphasize the intensity and strength of the male lust at the same time as it became common to talk about sexuality in terms of 'natural inclinations'," writes Jonas Liliequist (Liliequist 2006: 176). The idea that it could be dangerous to men's health to abstain from these "natural inclinations" emanates from the early sexual science during the latter half on 19th century and was used as an argument to defend prostitution. It was believed, as Yvonne Svanström points out, that if "men abstained from sex before marriage they could become sick" (Svanström 2004: 219 my transl.). The idea of man's "natural inclinations", his biological drive, which he cannot, will not and should not stop, have completely taken over in our time, says masculinity-scholar Jørgen Lorentzen. He describes it as a biologizing of male sexuality that "rests heavily over men's self-understanding".[3] (Lorentzen 2004: 155)

For a man in nineteenth century it was not just the issue of his biological drive. The fear of falling was also there. David Tjeder writes: "men could at any time give in to passions and lose character." (Tjeder 2006: 67) Although the ideal was a control of passions, there was also, Tjeder shows, a parallel concept of youth who must have its fling and a Don Juan-ideal that still saw the man as an active seducer constantly on the lookout for women (Tjeder 2006: 69).

By controlling his hunger for Bella's blood Edward manifests, like the other not- human-blood-drinking-vampires, the traditional link between mastery, masculinity and power. Restraint of hunger and restraint of sexuality has completely different implications today than in the nineteenth century. Abstaining from food has high status, while abstaining from sex has rather low status. Sara Kärrholm also reads Edward's control of his hunger and sexuality as an example of traditional values of masculinity in Western culture. In her way of elating Edward's sexuality to a suppression of drives she also confirms Lorentzen's point that male sexuality is seen as inherently biological. Edward's body is not associated with giving in to the forces of nature:

> Instead it is associated with traditionally idealized masculine values in Western culture, where the suppression of primitive drives is interpreted as the most difficult and therefore also the noblest sacrifice a man can make in order to uphold civilization. It is however also important that the sex drive is strong to begin with, otherwise the effort of denying it would not be so great and his masculinity could be questioned. In portraying Edward as a predator, his masculinity is secured and the nobility of his civilized manners becomes even more apparent. In this respect Edward is a typical example of the new kind of vampire that has become frequent in modern vampire stories. /…/ Edwards version of the vampire can be paralleled with Van Helsing's in Stoker's *Dracula*; as the male guardian of female chastity with enough strength and skill to ensure that the perils of female sexuality will not be let loose (Kärrholm 2011: 50).

Even though I share Kärrholm's analysis of Edward's control as manifesting idealized masculine values I disagree with her on interpreting Edward as a guardian of female chastity. Höglund's remark that hunger should not be seen as an analogy to sexuality in the contemporary vampire story makes it possible to interpret Edward's abstention from sex as a subversion of the very kind of masculinity that he manifested in his hunger control. When Edward controls his sexuality he makes it a question of will and not biological drive. A contemporary conception of masculinity understood, according to Lorentzen, as a sexuality that is primarily driven by an innate biological drive is thus undermined.

Tracy Bealer points out that Edward's way of abstaining from both eating Bella and having sex with her makes him a masochist, and that this is the point where his abstaining becomes radical because it is a matter of choice.

> Because Edward is a vampire, as long as Bella is human he must repeatedly submit himself to the ain of denying his desire to consume her or consummate their relationship physically. He must suffer every time he sees her. What makes male vampires who fall in love with humans, and Edward in particular, potentially politically progressive is precisely the *repetition* of this masochistically painful disavowal of the hypermasculine penetrativeness and lethality of the body. Discarding normative gender roles is not something one does once. Social expectations are as pernicious and powerful as Edward's bloodlust, and must be constantly challenged and negotiated. (Bealer 2011: 145)

Through his abstinence Edward shows that sex and love is a question of culture, that there are different approaches and possible ways to be a sexual being. In his role as vampire Edward can simultaneously stage a traditional, self-controlled masculinity with all the connotations of power, and a new masculinity that rejects equating masculinity with sexual drive. It is the vampire Edward, not human boys, who offers an alternative masculinity, rooted in culture, and possible to change.

Bella's desire to become like Edward, to remain the same age as him, equal with him, makes her really want to become a vampire. Edward does not want to expose her to his own fate, but reluctantly agrees, on the condition that she marries him. At the same time he postpones the consummation of their relationship until after their marriage.

> "I was not born yesterday." He chuckled in my ear. "Out of the two of us, which do you think is most unwilling to give the other what they want?" [...] I exhaled with a loud huff. "I have to marry you first?" "That's the deal – take it or leave it. Compromise, remember?"(Meyer 2007: 450)

A theme in the nineteenth century novel, like Austen's, Brontë's and Eliot's, is the importance of freedom in order for love to be genuine. Unconditional love requires unconditional freedom. Both Bella and Edward must be free in relation to each other before they can actually meet. Bella does not hesitate about her love for Edward, but she dislikes all the fuss around a wedding. Deffenbacher and Zagoria-Moffet, who has made a comparison between *Jane Eyre* and *Twilight*, writes that "The greatest danger that their respective Edwards pose to the heroines

of *Jane Eyre* and the *Twilight* saga is to their sprits, to their independence and will" (Deffenbacher & Zagoria-Moffet 2011: 36). In their different ways both heroines have to resist their Edwards in different ways, so that in the end their actions can "lead to the Byronic Edwards recognizing their selfishness and amending their ways" (Deffenbacher & Zagoria-Moffet 2011: 37). One of the amends Edward Cullen has to do is to stop deciding over and for Bella and let her decide and choose for herself.

At the end of *Eclipse* Edward finally takes in Bella's feelings and withdraws his demand for marriage. He is willing to complete their relationship anyway: "I've clung with such an idiotic obstinacy to my idea of what's best for you, though it's only hurt you. [...] I don't trust myself anymore. You can have happiness your way" (Meyer 2007: 617). At last Edward is willing to make love to her. He realizes that he has made his own desire to marry before sex to a norm that he has forced on Bella under the notion that it was "best for her" when it was actually all about him. At last Edward understands that Bella has to decide for herself what she wants.

When Edward finally gives Bella freedom, she can *choose* to give him what he wants. With an effort, Bella says no to sex there and then in the meadow. Instead she decides to affirm his wish of marriage in its entire extent with mom, dad, sisters, friends – everything. There are several aspects of this scene. One is of course the effect that the no-sex-before-wedding still remains. But what is more interesting is that first when Edward gives Bella freedom, can she really say yes to marrying him. In fact Edward's granting Bella the freedom and responsibility to choose for herself is the ultimate necessary condition for the story to realize its "happy end". Edward has to stop clinging to "my idea of what's best for you". He has to prove his love by taking the risk of not getting what he wants, namely marriage. Edward has to give Bella the freedom to choose and to reject him if she wanted too. Based on that freedom it becomes possible for Bella to let go of her resistance to marriage and say yes. When Edward grants Bella the freedom to choose for herself, she can take in the situation in its entirety: Edward's needs, her parents' need of a farewell, the vampire family's needs of human experiences. She does exactly what Alice Cullen explained what a Cullen must be able to do: "Part of being a Cullen is being meticulously responsible" (Meyer 2007: 581). When she has the freedom of choice she can see the marriage in a much larger context, based on other people's desires as well as her own. Her "yes" is therefore not a young girl's consent to a strong man's desire, but an adult woman's mature, informed decision to unite her life with another being.

Class and Gender Order in the World of Werewolves and Vampires

If Edward is an old-fashioned gentleman Jacob Black is not. Class difference, character difference, and the battle for Bella's love between Edward and the qui-lote and later werewolf Jacob is a theme through all the books. Unlike Edward Jacob does not control his desires. He forces Bella to kiss him. Even if he is there for Bella when she needs him, he is not below trying to manipulate her into loving him. Bella feels strongly about Jacob. They are close friends. Jacob becomes very important to Bella especially during the period when Edward has left her. But she never feels the same intense physical attraction for Jacob as she feels for Edward.

The relationship between werewolves and vampires are a recurring theme in contemporary vampire literature. The antagonism between werewolves and vampires, as well as the heroine's romantic wavering between them, is one of several similarities between the Charlaine Harris series about Sookie Stackhouse, Laurell K. Hamilton's series about Anita Blake and Meyer's *Twilight* series. Another similarity is the class difference between the vampire's upper class and the werewolf's working class. Edward is no exception. His family is rich, well educated, they are wearing fashionable clothes and live in a big, beautiful house, where they play music and read books. In this respect Edward connects to the tradition from Polidori's Lord Ruthven over Stoker's Dracula. The story seems to take for granted, as both Edward and Jacob does, that Bella, whether she chooses one or the other, will follow her husbands lead and be a part of *his* live rather than creating her own. The romantic choice between Edward and Jacob therefore hides implicit questions of class and race. Sara Kärrholm has pointed out that Bella's constant comparisons between the skin colour of the vampires and the werewolves calls attention to her own shortcomings and feelings of being incomplete: "in order to become beautiful she needs to either add colour to herself or become *as white as* the vampires. These options are, in a way that is typical for the romantic genre, described as a choice between two men." The traditional notion that the woman conforms to her husbands name, class and lifestyle in *Twilight* confirms discourses of white middleclass supremacy.

As the daughter of the chief of police Bella's class position is somewhere between Edward and Jacob. The issue of class recurs several times. The first time is when Bella is going to visit Edward's parents and she worries that they will not accept her as Edward's girlfriend. "'I'm not afraid of *them*.' I explained. 'I'm afraid they will not ... like me. Won't they be, well surprised that you bring someone ... like me ... home to meet them?'"(Meyer 2005: 316). Although what is referred to here is her humanity, you cannot mistake the class reference. Even though Bella feels uncomfortable with the difference in financial situation between herself and Edward's family it is never really questioned that she will be a part of the same lifestyle as soon they are married. The difference between Bella

and Edward in relation to class resonates of the relationship between Lizzie and Mr Darcy and Jane and Rochester. Here I agree with Hela Shachar that *Twilight* "signifies a dominant aspect of the romance mode that has been explored from its inception: the idea that love is inherently linked to economic status and security" (Shachar 2011: 157).

In contemporary vampire stories the werewolf is initially depicted as a regular, good guy, in contrast to the vampire's sophistication, which can also be associated with perversion and gender transgression. This also applies to Jacob, especially before he becomes a werewolf. In the beginning he is portrayed as a nice guy working with motorbikes. Even later when he has become a werewolf, he describes himself as the "natural" choice for Bella:

> "I am exactly right for you, Bella. It would have been effortless for us – comfortable, easy as breathing. I was the natural path your life would have taken ..."[...] "If the world was the way it was supposed to be, if there were no monsters and no magic ..." [...] "He is like a drug for you Bella [...] But I would have been healthier for you. Not a drug."(Meyer 2007: 598)

The question is whether Jacob would really have been healthier for Bella? Although they know each other since childhood and their fathers are best friends, and Jacob can give Bella a life with family and children, is a life on the reservation right for Bella? The fact that Jacob is a Native American who lives and goes to school on the reservation is hardly commented on in the novels, and very little in the research around *Twilight*.[4] Natalie Wilson points that out: "Bella never sees race, never reflects upon the mixed race connotations of her relation to Jacob. Her failure to recognize her own racially based privileges results in a text that renders white privilege invisible" (Wilson 2011: 58)

Jacob is portrayed as a pretty ordinary guy despite all the werewolf mythology, and does not have to play the mysterious Native American. It is a reflection of both class difference and a very real racism that Native Americans are restricted to specific areas and both materially and culturally poorer than people around. The difference between the well-travelled Carlisle Cullen who is a doctor, and Jacob's father in his wheelchair who spends his days fishing and watching baseball on TV is very telling. The Cullens are white and beautiful and have "all sorts of privileges that echo real world white privilege or the social capital afforded to those with white skin" (Wilson 2011: 56)

However, there is another, more cruel, but feminist, aspect where class and ethnicity matter. Werewolves are pack animals, and werewolf men will always sooner or later be drawn into pack politics. The pack's homosocial community is controlled by its own laws and rules. Both Sookie Stackhouse and Anita Blake leave their werewolf lovers in favour of the vampire since the werewolf is too controlled by and absorbed in the male community of pack politics. In *Twilight* werewolves in their wolf shape form a single consciousness that follows the leader. In love, they are also remarkably controlled by their wolfishness because they

are conditioned to stay with their partner and once, a pair relation is formed it cannot be changed. Werewolves, unlike vampires, appear to have no free will.

In *Twilight* there are vampires of both sexes. Werewolf women occur but are rare and they are subordinate to men. In the werewolf world there is domestic violence. Sam once lost control and tore up the face of his wife Emily. Since then she is heavily scarred. But Emily with the ruined face is still sweet and kind and cooks for all the werewolves. It can be compared to the home of the Cullens were Rosalie, Edward's sister, lies under a sports car and does the repair while her husband sits beside the car and hands her the tools (Meyer 2007: 342). Besides education and a comfortable life the vampire world also offers a much wider variety of gender constructions.

Would Bella really marry the Native American guy who does not have any plans for further education and settle with him on the reserve as Jacob sees as her natural choice? Would her father accept it, when it came down to it? As Natalie Wilson points out "This choice [between two men] read in the context of the racial ideologies that shape US society reinforces messages of white superiority" (Kärrholm 2011: 55). Jacob, the Native American quielote, is there just to be refused. It is the Native American and not the vampire who is "the other" in this story.

However, Jacob has a structurally important role: his significance for Bella forces Edward to get over his jealousy. Like Mr Darcy or Edward Rochester Edward must learn that he cannot decide for his partner, however good his intentions are. As the controlled gentleman Edward is, he never admits to being jealous, but he tries to steer Bella's visits to Jacob in a variety of ways. Bella rejects Edward's rules and meets Jacob anyway and Edward is forced to accept her wishes and choice of friends.

> "I decided that you were right. My problem before was more about my ... Prejudice against werewolves than anything else [...] And ... most importantly ... I'm not willing to let this drive a wedge between us." (Meyer 2007: 190)

Circumstances force the werewolves and the Cullen family to cooperate when they are attacked, but at the heart of this is Bella's desire to maintain her friendship with Jacob, and Edward's maturity in terms of overcoming prejudice and jealousy.

In the last part, *Breaking Dawn*, when Bella is pregnant and very sick, a desperate and worried Edward who wants Bella to have an abortion without depriving her of the possibility to have children, offers Jacob to enter into a menage à trois with them. Jacob would then be the biological father of Bella's children. However, before Jacob has time to accept the offer, Edward suddenly connects to the child, whose thoughts he can read even in Bella's belly. Thus the polyamorous possibilities are averted in favour of a traditional heteronormative family. But as in the classic Gothic novel Edward's offer has still stretched the limits. A possibility averted is still a possibility known.

Even though this could have been an interesting solution to Bella's love for both Edward and Jacob this is also a sign that Edward once again tried to decide what is best for Bella. A deal between two men how to share a woman's body. Bella opted for another solution. Edward's first reaction to Bella's pregnancy is panic. Convinced that he fathered a monster it is impossible for him take on fatherhood. Bella responds by evading him and allying with Rosalie. The possibility of another kind of family, consisting of two women and a child, is suggested here. Like in the example above a possibility averted is still a possibility known.

Only a Vampire can Challenge the Gender-order

If Edward managed to realize that he had to give Bella the freedom to choose if she wanted to live with him within or outside marriage, he seems to forget this when Bella gets pregnant. Bella's pregnancy, just like Edwards abstinence, marks a point where *Twilight's* different levels of being at the same time gender-traditional *and* feminist intersect in a complex way. The brutal and dramatic depiction of Bella's pregnancy, giving birth, dying, and becoming a vampire has by many been interpreted as a normative signal that motherhood "is the only licit objective of womanhood" as Merinne Whitton puts it (Witton 2011: 125). Many share Whitton's view that motherhood in the saga "suggests a maternal ideal in which self-sacrifice amounting to masochism is inherent" (Whitton 2011: 125; Taylor 2012).

As in the case with Edward's abstinence I prefer to read Bella's pregnancy and motherhood as a more complex phenomenon situated within the story's narration, not only seeing this as a message to young women but as question of narration and plot. What does Bella's pregnancy cause within the plot? Bella's pregnancy has two ultimate functions within the story. First of all, it is the last test where Edward once and for all has to accept that he cannot "protect" Bella, that is decide what is good for her. Secondly the pregnancy, with its threat to Bella's life, works as an instrument in making Edward *want* to make her a vampire – something she has asked for from early on in their relationship, but which he has refused to do. Finally he is giving her all she has asked for in the relationship. In that last act, when he actually bites her, it is a gesture that has a completely different connotation than the threat that has been a theme throughout all four volumes, namely the risk of his eating, or biting her by accident from lack of control over his violent side. When it finally happens it is an act of love and care, as Jacob is a witness to: "It was like he was kissing her, brushing his lips at her throat, at her wrists, into the crease at the inside of her arm. But I could hear the lush tearing of her skin as his teeth bit through, again, and again, forcing venom into her system at as many points as possible." (Meyer 2008: 354-355). When Edward finally bites Bella it has nothing to do with being a predator and a lethal vampire. Edward shows, as Tracy Bealer writes: "what a constant negotiation between a phallic body and an

emphatic will might look like." (Bealer 2011: 149) During the course of the four books Edward has to amend his will to dominate, give Bella the right to make her own decisions and let her become an equal to himself in order for the story to complete its heteronormative "happy ending". Edward's change of character resonates of Edward Rochester's and of Mr Darcy's change from aggressive, manipulative and domineering. The reason for and the way in which he finally bites Bella makes Edward into an example of the contemporary male vampire's capacity to challenge notions of masculinity.

In the end Bella achieves what she sought; she could also save Edward:

> "A man and a woman have to be somewhat equal ... as in, one of them can't always be swooping in and saving the other one. They have to save each other equally. [...] I can't always be Lois Lane," I insisted, "I want to be Superman, too." (Meyer 2005: 473)

In the end, it is not only Mr Darcy who has changed, even Lois Lane has been allowed to grow and mature. That Bella actually becomes a vampire and therefore the same as Edward is the only thing that differs from the romance plot in the 19th century novel. In the *Twilight's* world of vampires the man learns to control his violent side, his jealousy and his need to dominate, and the woman becomes stronger and more equal when she has a child, and love can protect those who are close to you from all evil – a fairy tale for the twenty-first century.

During the two hundred years since Polidori's vampire Lord Ruthven stepped into our literature, the (usually male) vampire has continued to exert a special attraction for the woman in the story. In contemporary vampire literature it is precisely in the potential for transgressing and undermining gender that the vampire's allure lies. Even in *Twilight*, on the surface a conventional romance narrative, the vampire Edward is part of this tradition when his masculinity manifests itself as a fragile, temporary and changeable. Vampires seem to understand the importance of changing gender constructions as a condition of love's fulfilment.

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Notes

[1] This article is an elaborated and extended version of my article "Vampyren som Mr Darcy, Maskulinitet och begär i *Twilightserien*", I litteraturens underland. Festskrift till Boel Westin Red. Maria Andersson, Elina Druker och Kristin Hallberg, Stockholm, Makadam, 2011

[2] Collections such as Twilight and History (2010), Bitten by Twilight (2010) The Twilight Mystique (Clarke & Osborne 2010), Bringing Light to Twilight (Anatol 2011), Theorizing Twilight (2011) Interdiciplinary Approaches to Twilight (Larsson & Steiner 2011), and the monography Seduced by Twilight (Wilson 2011) all share an equal interest in Twilight as a contemporary cultural phenomenon.

[3] Like Svanström, Jørgensen points out that the notion of men's "natural inclinations" or drives has also been used to legitimate prostitution and pornography (Lorentzen 2004: 156).

[4] Naomi Zack, who points out that no one says that this is actually real people who exist and live in this place (Zack 2009: 124).

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Gendering Cultural Memory: Balzac´s *Adieu*

By Kristina Fjelkestam

Abstract

In this essay I examine the en-gendering of cultural memory in Honoré de Bal-zac´s story *Adieu* (1830), which proceeds from a repressed trauma originating in historical events. Balzac wrote the story in the spring of 1830, i. e. at a time when the French discontent with the Restoration regime was soon to explode in the July Revolution. The story is considered to claim that the Restoration regime's repres-sion of revolutionary history will recieve serious consequences in the present. But the question is how the *now* of the Restoration can best be linked to the *then* of the Revolution and the Empire? How can history be represented in a productive way, without silencing traumatic memories? My suggestion is that the abyss between now and then has to be met with an ethically informed respect for difference. Sté-phanie, the protagonist, dies when Philippe creates an exact replica of the traumat-ic situation in which they were separated many years ago. She then became a sex slave to the retiring French army, dehumanized during the hard Russian cam-paign, an experience that also dehumanized her. This Philippe refuses to acknowledge, since he wants to retrieve the woman he knew. That can of course never happen, but in insisting on it, I would claim that he actually renders Stépha-nies life after the trauma impossible. Instead of emphasizing the distinction be-tween past and present, Philippe overlooks it, with the severe consequence of Sté-phanie's death. In my analysis I relate to pertinent discussions in the interdiscipli-nary field of cultural memory studies (an expanding field of research within the wider frame of cultural studies), but since it rarely discusses gender aspects I find it essential to relate also to feminist scholars who continually have scrutinized issues concerning memory and history writing.

Keywords: Cultural Memory, Gender, Balzac, *Adieu*, Napoleon, French Revolu-tion

Introduction

Studies of "cultural memory", i.e. studies of what and how societies choose to remember and to forget, constitute an expanding field of research within the wider frame of cultural studies. In this essay, I would like to join the researchers who are developing a gender perspective in the field (cf. Reading 2002; Radstone 2007). They stress, for instance, that "what a culture remembers and what it chooses to forget are intricately bound up with issues of power and hegemony, and thus with gender" (Hirsch & Smith 2002: 6), a point that is never disussed by the handbook classics such as Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Nora, the Assmanns.[1] However, feminist scholars have continually studied memory and history writing, so I would also like to discuss some of this critical research within gender studies.

My aim here is to examine the en-gendering of cultural memory in Honoré de Balzac´s story *Adieu* (1830/1974), which proceeds from a trauma linked to historical events. It concerns men's sexual assaults on women, which makes up for a kind of eloquent silence in the story. However, as memories start to materialize, the female protagonist dies, and thus the story problematizes the question of what can, or even should, be remembered.

In the first section of the essay I will present the story of *Adieu*, and then relate it to previous research of it. In the second part I will proceed with a discussion of cultural memory studies and then read *Adieu* in the light of it, focusing on the gender specific aspects. What seems to be at stake in the story is the question of how history can be represented in a constructive instead of destructive way, without silencing traumatic memories, and interestingly enough Balzac chooses to dress this pressing question in female clothes.

Adieu

Adieu is included in Balzac´s Human Comedy, *La comédie humaine*, more precisely in the section Philosophical studies. The story, less than seventy pages long, is divided into three parts, the first of which begins *in medias res* − lieutenant Philippe de Sucy is hunting in the forrest and runs into a ghostly woman. She turns out to be his beloved Stéphanie, Countess de Vandières, and she really is a phantom of the past. They parted seven years ago and the only word she ever utters now is the last one spoken between them: "Adieu!"

In the second part of the story, the narrative traces back into the time and space of their parting, which took place during Napoleon´s Russian war, more specifically at the Berezina river during the winter of 1812. The French troups have been defeated and are being forced to retreat. The exhausted and starving soldiers are freezing in the temporary camp. By now they have become dehumanized by their sufferings, just like the generals who, by setting the camp on fire, force them to continue their march over the bridge. When the Russians arrive soon after, even

the bridge is set on fire, although the French troups are still on it. The river is filled with burning corpses. The remaining soldiers quickly assemble a raft out of the remaining debris, but there is not room for all. Philippe nobly leaves his space to Stéphanie and her husband, one of the generals. When the raft drifts away from the river bank she cries a last "Adieu!" to Philippe, who is sure to be killed, and soon her husband falls off the crowded raft and is immediately decapitated by a passing block of ice.

In the final part, entitled *La guérison* ("The Cure" in the English translation by Katharine Prescott Wormeley available at Gutenberg Project), the narrative has returned to the "now" of the beginning, 1819, and Stéphanie's story is told in retrospect. The troops pounce on her after the raft voyage, and for several years she is dragged along as their "plaything" (*jouet*). Later on she is confined to a mental hospital, escapes and is found by the relative who is now her caretaker and knows her story. Philippe decides to restore her mind, and he will try to do so by building an exact replica of the scene by the Berezina where they were once separated.

On his estate, Philippe finds a stream which vaguely reminds him of the Berezina. Here he erects a camp of small sheds along the bank and burns them down; he drives broken piles into the stream in order to imitate the destroyed bridge, and he builds a raft. Philippe also obtains hundreds of military uniforms in order to dress up the village peasants as soon as the winter snow falls. When it does, he conveys the sleeping Stéphanie to his "tragic representation" (*représentation tragique*), where he awakens her with a cannon shot. She regards this "living memory of a life past" (*souvenir vivant, cette vie passée*) and suddenly she is roused in the full sense of the word and really notices Philippe. When she thus relives the situation, her senses are infused with life, and she throws herself into his arms, cries and weakly utters: "Goodbye, Philippe. I love you, goodbye (*adieu*)!" But then she promptly dies, and the story ends with Philippe committing suicide.

Mediating History

Today, researchers like myself tend to be interested in the way the story questions the mediation of history, especially as put in Philippe's representation of Berezina in the final section (cf. Petrey 1993, Shuh 2001; Samuels 2002). But when *Adieu* was first re-issued in 1974, researchers instead focused on the realistic portrayal of war in the middle section of the story (cf. Gascar and Berthier in Balzac). The description of the horrors of war was hailed as lifelike, and the realistic style was considered to be new and as such to be the point of the story. Here, realism may thus be defined as a kind of representation where the sign harmonizes with the referent.

But already in 1975 Shoshana Felman argues quite the opposite, namely that the relationship between sign and referent in *Adieu* is disharmonious. Today Fel-

man's essay, "Women and Madness: The Critical Phallacy" from 1975, is considered a classic in its apprehension of the gender blindness of the male scholars of realism who completely overlook the central part of Stéphanie's. Their readings exclude both women and madness, Felman claims in her psychoanalytically informed deconstruction of the text.

From the very beginning the woman is considererd a problem in Balzac's story, according to Felman: "(…) She, who? (…) Who are you? (…) But who is this lady? (…) She? Who?" (Felman 1975/1997: 14) The questions are met with silence, or with the blank sign *adieu*, beacuse crazy women cannot speak. But at the same time madness is linked to femininity, since insanity implies the loss of it. For instance, Stéphanie can be tamed with lumps of sugar, and Philippe then gloomily mutters: "When she was a woman (…) she had no taste for sweet things" (*Quand elle était femme (…) elle n'avait aucun goût pour les mets sucrés*) To restore her sanity is to simultaneously restore her femininity, Felman stresses, which in the traditional Western gender discourse is the equivalent of a confirmation of men (Felman: 17). Stéphanie's insanity severs the correspondence between sign and referent, which Philippe tries to re-establish and normalize by making her pronounce his name. When he succeeds in forcing her to mirror his image of himself by the referential denomination "Philippe!", she dies, because a man's female Other can never be a subject in her own right. There have been other interpretations of Stéphanie's death besides Felman´s, however, and I will return to one of them below and in the conclusion of this essay I will try to formulate an interpretation of my own.

An important critique of the male realism scholars as well as of the feminist Felman is that, in the end, they take a similar view of what constitutes "realism", namely a transparent use of language where, unproblematically, the sign has a referent (Samuels: 85). But Balzac's realism does not consist of attempts to emulate a static reality; instead, according to recent research, it builds on insights about the complexity of reality and literature. Representations of "reality" always depend on literary conventions which change over time – something which was pointed out already by 1921 in Roman Jakobson's "Realism in Art." When history is depicted in new ways, as in *Adieu*, not only will our conceptions of the past be transformed, but also our conceptions of the present, since they are defined by the way in which we have constructed our history.

The Danish media scholar Søren Pold claims that Balzac's writings are emblematic of a kind of "media realism", aiming at investigations of mediation, literary *function*, rather than the production of works of art, a literary *artefact* (Pold 2004: 95). For instance, Pold points out *Illusions perdues* (1837-43), which actually deals with the function of literature as a specific medium, since it is a novel about how a novel is written, manufactured and sold within the capitalist process of production (Pold 2004: 78). But first and foremost Pold examines *Histoire des Treize* (1833-1835) which, amongst other things, discusses the panorama, a very

popular medium at the time. Here, the panorama's mediation of time and space is studied in terms of a technologizing of sense perception. These "spectacles" represented, among other things, famous war battles, and their purpose was to make the audience feel like they were really *there*. The panoramas were placed in dark rotundas, lit up only by flickering candles, and this dramatically visual realism – also represented in contemporaneous waxworks exhibitions and boulevard theatres – was meant to materialize the past, thus enabling an encounter with historical events.

The panorama, "to see all" (from gr. *pan*, all, och *horama*, sight), consisted of enormous, circular paintings that gave the impression of depth, and when depicting different kinds of landscapes they can be said to have offered a kind of armchair tourism. But first and foremost they represented historically important war scenes with a nationalistic agenda. During the latter half of the 19th century, when even the French workers could afford a ticket, lost battles were depicted in order to install a patriotic lust for vengeance (Schwartz 1998: 158). During the former part of the century, when only members of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie could afford the entrance fee, French victories at Wagram, Navarino, and Sevastopol were depicted instead. Napoleon was supposedly so impressed by the medium that, in 1810, he decided to build more rotundas by the Champs-Elysées, which were to popularize his military success (his losses in Russia a couple of years later thwarted these plans; Oettermann 1980: 120).

From the entrance the audience was led through a dark passage up towards a platform in the midst of the rotunda. Here all parts of the panorama could be inspected, at first somewhat obscurely. An illusion of reality was created by means of strategically placed shadows and lights, and plastic *faux terrain* with objects and wax figures woven into the painting with the effect of *trompe l'oeil*. An illustrative example is the panorama that scored a formidable success in Paris in 1831. Here, the artist Jean Charles Langlois represented the naval battle at Navarino in Greece, where, five years earlier, the French together with the English and the Russians had conquered the Turks. Langlois had built a rotunda solely for his big painting, and he had obtained the battleship *Scipion*, whose deck constituted the outlook of the panorama. The dark corridor that led there went below deck and gave the audience an opportunity to experience the quarters of the seamen before meeting the actual theatre of war. The panorama measured about 125 metres in circumference and the different objects, among them the ship, melted seamlessly into the canvas of the painting. The painted flames of fire were enhanced with gas flames, which was said to have caused panic among the spectators (Oettermann 1980: 126). Pold stresses that not only did the panorama represent events of the past, but it also simulated a continuous present. As such, the panorama both *re-produces* and *re-presents* reality (Pold 2004: 158-161). This is also the case in Philippe's imitation of the Berezina river.

When Maurice Samuels discusses the role of the panorama in Balzac, he takes *Adieu* as his specific example. In his essay "Realizing the Past: History and Spectacle in Balzac´s *Adieu*", Samuels reads Balzac's reviews of contemporary panorama exhibitions and shows that he was very critical of them. Balzac believed that this kind of spectacle generated passivity in the audience and their relationship to the past, because they could only *watch* what was happening without having any means to actively intervene in the event. Therefore, with a slight exaggeration, Samuels could be said to argue that *Adieu* ends with the death of the panorama audience – in the symbolic shape of Stéphanie. Samuels thus problematizes both the history writing and the realist idiom of the period in an interesting fashion, but he is just as gender blind as the male realism scholars of the 1970s. What does it mean, for instance, that the panorama spectators are symbolized by a woman? Today we all well know that both passive imitation and mass culture phenomena were coded as female at the time, a fact that Samuels never discusses. The question is also in what way Balzac's views on history and realism were related to his aversion to rival sentimental novels written by female best-selling writers such as Madame de Staël – a matter I will not pursue in this essay, though (cf. Cohen 1999). Instead, I will now proceed with a discussion of cultural memory studies and then read *Adieu* in the light of it.

Cultural Memory

We remember as well as forget by way of the stories which make up our history, and these stories are filtered through power structures such as gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality. When using a term such as "cultural memory", the research field attempts to put these social and cultural dimensions of remembrance into words. A current stipulative definition could be said to contain a general formulation such as "the interplay of present and past in sociocultural contexts" (*A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*: 2). Three different dimensions may be distinguished here, namely the cognitive, the social and the mediating dimension. Thus, for a memory to be meaningful when it is represented in, for instance, rituals, media or institutions, it must be brought to the fore by individuals who are fairly agreed on apprehensions of the past – for instance citizens in a nation state. As such, cultural memory is something both individual and sociocultural (Bal 1999: vii). This is also the reason why it is a constantly ongoing process, since our memories of the past are steadily changing with the contemporaneous apprehensions and questions put to it.

Initially, however, memory and history were considered opposites in the field. Maurice Halbwachs defined his term "collective memory" as socially tied to local experiences, while "history" was defined in a positivist manner as an empirical, archive based re-construction of the past (Halbwachs 1950). This division has later been criticized by, amongst others, Peter Burke, who instead considers histo-

ry writing as something actually constructed by social memories, and by Aleida and Jan Assmann who introduced the term *kulturelles Gedächtnis*, cultural memory, which replaces "collective memory" in its inclusion of both history writing and locally established stories, rituals and monuments (Burke 1989; J. Assmann 1995).

More recent researcher Pierre Nora, for his part, also draws up problematic polarities concerning different kinds of memories. In his gigantic inventory of French monuments, or memory sites, *Les lieux de mémoire* (seven volumes, 1984-1992), Nora considers monuments as materializing cultural memory. However, these monuments and sites of memory are defined as inauthentic in comparison to people's lived memories, which are defined as authentic. Nora considers the intense memory work taking place in today's society as depending on a prevalent feeling of loss: "There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory" (Nora 1989: 7). This apprehension of memory as being either authentic or inauthentic has of course been criticized, and instead researchers now seem to agree that the relation between different types of memories is of an interactive kind.

Remembrance as such constitutes a dynamic reflexive act with political consequences, and I would like to claim that feminists have taken this fact as a starting point both earlier and more explicitly than has been the case in the field of cultural memory studies. Ever since the feminist consciousness-raising groups of the 1960s, individual memories have been considered political in elucidating repressive structures and thus enabling change. Feminist memory work has been systematized first and foremost by Frigga Haug (Haug 1987). The central question here is whose memories and whose experiences are considered valid. What society chooses to remember becomes "the truth", from the greek word *alatheia*, the opposite of which is not untruthfulness but oblivion, *lethe*. Oblivion is one of the principal means of the exercise of power (as Herbert Marcuse also rightly pointed out).

Memory and history writing have thus constituted essential interests for the feminist endeavour ever since the *gynæceum* of the Middle Ages catalogued women in history. Eventually, the empirically additive *herstory* of the second wave led up to a theoretical revision of History (in singular with a capital letter), in favour of histories (in plural and with a lower-case letter). As Annette Kuhn expresses it: "Telling stories about the past, our past, is a key moment in the making of our selves." (Kuhn 1995: 2) Thus o*ral history* has developed into an important tool in feminist work because it puts the spotlight on forgotten or dropped memories and experiences (cf. *Gender and Memory* 2005). One example is the debate on incest that broke out in the 1990s. At that time feminist scholars had begun to study the occurrence of domestic sexual abuse, but women's memories of childhood traumas were questioned by critics. Later on, the ideological content of the debate has been examined, and here reflections on the truthfulness of re-

membrance – constantly discussed in law and witness psychology – have been brought to a head (Haaken 1998). Thus, memory research can be closely linked to trauma research, and feminist memory studies have often come to deal with sexual abuse, whereas cultural memory studies are often dealing with the Holocaust.

National Trauma

There is no sharp dividing line between trauma and history either. Instead, history writing deals almost exclusively with war and genocide. What I find interesting in Balzac's *Adieu* is the very fact that the story en-genders a silenced national trauma. Here, the societal repression of (some) historical events is represented by the eloquent silence of Stéphanie, and the consequences of war are materialized in her devastated body.

Adieu is, as I see it, above all an attempt to mediate this repressed history in the form of cultural memory. Balzac wrote this story in the spring of 1830, i. e. at a time when the French discontent with the Restoration regime was soon to explode in the July Revolution. The story seems to claim that the Restoration regime's repression of the revolutionary history will have serious consequences in the present (Shuh 2001: 50). But the question is how the *now* of the Restoration can best be linked to the *then* of the Revolution and the Empire? How can history be represented in a productive way, without silencing traumatic memories?

Rachel Shuh points out that the middle section of *Adieu* depicts the Berezina theatre of war in a way that resembles the new kinds of history writing which had begun to appear, perhaps in particular Philippe de Ségur's widely disseminated *Histoire de Napoléon et de la Grande-Armée pendant l'anné 1812* from 1824, the graphic and unflattering details of which were hailed by people like Stendhal. However, in de Ségur the dehumanization of the soldiers, caused by hardships, takes the shape of cannibalism, while in Balzac it is represented by the sexual abuse of Stéphanie (Shuh 2004: 42). Balzac can thus be said to annex the markers of the new history writing, and to transpose them to his human comedy by changing the gender of the main character and have her experience a gender-specific trauma.

In the final part of *Adieu*, Philippe tries to bridge the gap between now and then by imitating the Berezina episode. However, as Rachel Shuh points out, the bridge has already been burnt down even in a figurative sense (i. e. in terms of the Restoration regime's annihilated relations to the past):

> Given the anguish that post-Revolutionary society experiences in its alienation from the past and in the collapse of continuity, one can read the disaster of the Berezina as a symbol of the destruction of the ties to the past, the closing off of the familiar, and the despair of being set adrift in the present. By restaging this traumatic moment, Philippe and Balzac would be attempting to effect a cure for Stéphanie and for the post-Revolutionary society (Shuh 2004: 48).

The cure backfires, however. Instead of being cured, Stéphanie dies − and France, for its part, will explode in yet another revolution. Obviously, an unproblematized depiction of history cannot cure problems in the present. So how could it have been depicted instead? How can the re-presentation in *Adieu*, which only smooths over the differences between now and then by trying to be as "similar" as possible, become a more dynamic representation that can be *different* as well as make a *difference*?

I want to stress the fact that *Adieu* speaks of the importance of remembering history, but not without questioning its representations. The passivizing panorama and the uncomplicating re-presentation are criticized in the story, but with no suggestion that Stéphanie's experience should be passed over in silence. In contrast to the Restoration, the July Monarchy wanted to integrate the present with the revolutionary and the imperial past. For instance, during the Restoration it was forbidden even to mention the name of Napoleon, which led to a frantic interest in him after 1830 (cf. Samuel's 2004: appendix cataloguing Napoleon plays in Paris theatres 1830-31).

Balzac, for his part, stopped writing historical novels altogether after 1830. Instead he went on to write contemporaneous novels into which he would weave the consequences of historical events. It was all about "a consciously historical conception of the present", as Georg Lukács writes in his book on the development of the historical novel (quoted in Samuels 2004: 196). After the French revolution in 1789, new ways of expressing historical memories were established, as illustrated by the historical novel, the panorama and realism, and here the main point was to integrate the past with the present by putting silenced traumas into words.

Stéphanie dies when Philippe creates an exact replica of Berezina, because she is no longer the woman she used to be. After their heartbreaking farewell seven years earlier, she became a sex slave to a retiring French army dehumanized during the hard Russian campaign, an experience that also dehumanized her. This Philippe refuses to acknowledge, since he wants to get back the woman he knew. That can of course never happen, but in insisting on it, I would claim that he actually renders Stéphanies life after the trauma impossible. Instead of emphasizing the distinction between past and present, Philippe overlooks it. Thus, historical events appear to be similar to events in the present, or to resemble them, even though they hold a traumatic abyss between past and present.

If it is even possible to listen to the eloquent silence of cultural memories, then the abyss between now and then, in all its senses, must be met with an ethically responsible respect for difference. The abyss of memory is a necessary link to the past, and in spite of all the burnt bridges we must still try to build the rickety plank of historizing across to the other side, because only then do we have a possibility to reach it − and to come back. Thus this frail link may break at any time during our unsteady trip over the precipice of memory, but that is exactly why it is essential to hold on to the conviction that the balancing act is worth while.

Silence must get an opportunity to speak.

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Notes

[1]   Cf. Erll & Nünning 2010; Olick et al. 2011. However, some mentioning or even inclusion of a gender perspective is seen in Whitehead 2009: 13; Radstone & Schwartz 2010; Hodgkin & Radstone 2003.

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Reproduction, Politics, and John Irving's
The Cider House Rules:
Women's Rights or "Fetal Rights"?

By Helena Wahlström

Abstract

While hotly debated in political contexts, abortion has seldom figured in explicit terms in either literature or film in the United States. An exception is John Irving's 1985 novel *The Cider House Rules*, which treats abortion insistently and explicitly. Although soon thirty years old, *The Cider House Rules* still functions as an important voice in the ongoing discussion about reproductive rights, responsibilities, and politics. Irving represents abortion as primarily a women's health issue and a political issue, but also stresses the power and responsibility of men in abortion policy and debate. The novel rejects a "pro-life" stance in favor of a women's rights perspective, and clearly illustrates that abortion does not preclude or negate motherhood. This article discusses Irving's novel in order to address abortion as a political issue, the gender politics of fictional representations of abortion, and the uses of such representations in critical practice. A brief introduction to the abortion issue in American cultural representation and in recent US history offers context to the abortion issue in Irving's novel. The analysis focuses on abortion as it figures in the novel, and on how abortion figures in the criticism of the novel that explicitly focuses on this issue. The article argues that twenty-first century criticism of Irving's text, by feminist scholars as well as explicitly anti-feminist pro-life advocates, demonstrate the pervasive influence of anti-abortion discourses illustrates, since these readings of Irving's novel include, or reactively respond to, the fetal rights discourse and the "awfulization of abortion." The article further proposes that the novel's representations of reproductive rights issues – especially abortion – are still relevant today, and that critical readings of fictional and nonfictional representations of reproductive rights issues are central to feminist politics.

Keywords: Abortion, *The Cider House Rules*, gender, John Irving, motherhood, representation.

Introduction

As seen in the latest election campaigns,[1] the abortion issue is central in US politics today, and a Presidential candidate's stance on the issue is important to voters. We have also witnessed some astounding statements by US politicians about abortion, "legitimate rape" and divine interventions. Abortion, it is clear, continues to be a controversial topic, forty years after its legalization. This article uses John Irving's 1985 novel *The Cider House Rules* – an unusual novel in its insistent and explicit treatment of abortion – in order to address abortion as a political issue, the gender politics of fictional representations of abortion, and the uses of such representations in critical practice. Although Irving's novel will soon be thirty years old, it can still function as an important voice in the ongoing discussion about abortion/reproduction in terms of rights, responsibilities, and politics. After a brief introduction to the abortion issue in American cultural representation and in – mostly recent – US history, the discussion turns to the abortion issue and Irving's novel. First, to address abortion as it figures in the novel, and second to address how abortion figures in criticism of the novel that explicitly focuses on this issue. This is done in order to argue the continuing relevance of the novel's representations of reproductive rights issues – especially abortion – today. But it is also the purpose of this discussion to demonstrate that in recent critical texts Irving's representations of abortion and abortion rights are framed in ways that signal the pervasive influence of anti-abortion discourses and developments, such as the "fetal rights" movement and the "awfulization of abortion."[2]

Although the following discussion focuses on the US context, some connection needs to be made to the Swedish and European context. In part because this is the one within which I am writing and, at various times, have taught Irving's novel. And in part because here, too, Irving is a much read author, which raises questions about how the novel's "America" can be understood in this other geographical context. Sweden, in its mainstream variety, is a very different and much more secular culture than the US, and I would venture to say that until very recently, although there has been a minor "right to life" movement here as well, abortion as a free right for all women has been taken for granted by many since its legalization in 1975. Does *The Cider House Rules* and its early twentieth-century/covert 1980s America, perhaps also its main theme of "abortion rights," function for a (mainstream and secular) Swedish reader only as an exotic (and undereducated) "other"?[3] I would suggest that the novel is urgent reading also within a European and a Swedish context today, even more so than at its time of publication. While the abortion issue is central in US politics today, it is also rising on the agenda of European politics, even as I write this article. In 2010, a major decision was taken in the European Council, the result of which is that no one can be held responsible for refusing to perform, facilitate, or assist in abortion, or any action that could result in the death of a human fetus or embryo (*Sydsvenska Dagbladet*); although

this is a recommendation, not legislation, it may come to have far-reaching effects in all of Europe, including Sweden. In the fall of 2012, Tonio Borg, an avid anti-abortion advocate from Malta, a country where abortion is prohibited by law and may result in up to three years in jail for both women who seek them and doctors who perform them, took a seat as the EU official responsible for health issues. At this time, as well, the European version of a "fetal rights movement" ("One of Us"), supported by the Pope, sought to limit women's access to abortion across Europe. These developments signal the urgency of addressing and critiquing cultural representations of abortion, and for analyzing abortion as a social phenomenon, from feminist perspectives.

Abortion and Cultural Representation

While hotly debated in political contexts, in twentieth century fictional representations abortion has seldom figured in explicit terms in either literature or film in the US. Recent years have seen the publication of studies on representations of abortion, for example in film (Arp 2008; MacGibbon (2006)), comic books, poetry, and short stories (Myrsiades 2002) and novels (Koloze 2005; Baker-Sperry 2009).[4] Researchers contend that because of its controversial nature, but also as a result of the Comstock Laws, abortion has typically been addressed via narrative indirection, allusion, or circumvention (Wilt 1990; MacGibbon 2006).[5] An exception to this rule, however, is Irving's *The Cider House Rules*. Given Irving's very explicit treatment of abortion, contraception, and childbirth, this is probably the only bestselling, mainstream novel to speak so thoroughly and continuously about abortion, written by a major American author.[6] Between its publication in the 1980s and the present, Irving's novel, besides being treated by literary scholars, has also figured as a pedagogical tool within areas as diverse as medicine, law, and interdisciplinary abortion studies.[7] *The Cider House Rules* remains a central American "abortion novel" – as witnessed by its inclusion in book-length studies on abortion in American fiction, including Judith Wilt's pioneering study of motherhood and abortion (Wilt 1990).

The novel was published at a time when the movement for "fetal rights" gained momentum (Kaplan 1994) and when abortion rights were "under siege" but the assault had yet to reach its heights (Rockwood 1996/2004: 124). Additionally, the 1980s was the decade that saw the publication of many groundbreaking academic feminist studies on abortion, including Kristin Luker's *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (1984) and Rosalind Pollack Pechesky's *Abortion and Woman's Choice* (1986). The 1990s saw the continuation of academic as well as activist publications on reproduction, both on the history of abortion (Raegan 1998) and on the myths of motherhood (Ladd-Taylor & Umansky 1998), but this was also the decade when various reactionary men's movements like the Promisekeepers called for a "return" to a patriarchal family order, and abortion clinics and those

who worked there increasingly became the targets of anti-abortion terrorism (Levine 2002: 118).[8]

In the twenty-first century, studies such as *The Reproductive Rights Reader* (Nancy Ehrenreich 2008), *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement* (Nelson 2003), and *Interdisciplinary Views on Abortion* (Martinelli-Fernandez et al. 2009) signal the continued need for producing, collecting, and reprinting feminist and gender-critical scholarship on reproduction issues, that takes women's diverse perspectives into account, as does the forthcoming new edition of Luker's study (2012). Meanwhile, stridently "pro-life" publications on abortion and American culture such as Stetson's *The Silent Subject* (1996)[9] and Koloze's *An Ethical Analysis of the Portrayal of Abortion in American Fiction* (2005) continue to present abortion not as a matter of reproductive rights for women, but as a question of moral philosophy that strangely erases sexuality, gender – and women's bodies – social situation, and medicine from the picture. These divergent strands of scholarship that stretch from feminist/women's reproductive rights perspectives to anti-feminist pro-life perspectives can also be traced in the history of abortion as a public issue in the US.

Reproduction and Abortion in the US

As a public concern in the United States, abortion has gone from being a non-issue before the 1850s, to being an issue of great concern for medical professionals, theologians, and legislators in the period 1850-1960, and then to becoming a highly divisive political issue in the past forty years (Luker 1984; Reagan 1997; Nelson 2003; Ehrenreich 2007; Radosh 2009). We are now at a point when – as seen in the 2012 election – no presidential candidate can remain silent on his/her stance about abortion/reproduction, and his/her stance on abortion seems decisive for voters (*New York Times* articles e g); abortion is an issue in national politics, as it is in state politics.

Many anti-abortion advocates in the US, including the Republican Party, call for a total ban on abortion as a "return" to "traditional" family values. As researchers have noted, however, abortion has been legal, not illegal, for most of US history; only in 1859 did abortion become illegal (first in Maine, and subsequently in other states), and even then, physicians would often perform abortions, and they continued to do so under certain circumstances until *Roe vs. Wade*, the Supreme Court ruling that made abortion legal in 1973. Furthermore, public opinion has been rather consistent over the past few decades, with 22 percent of the American population stating that abortion should never be legal in 1975 as well as in 2005, while a majority of the population supports abortion as a legal right for women: "support for abortion on demand, or under some circumstances, has remained at about 78 percent of the American population for 30 years" (Radosh 2009: 26). Nevertheless, ever since *Roe vs. Wade*, federal and state legislature has

resulted in a dramatic decrease in the availability of abortion. This began with the Hyde Amendment in 1979, which meant that abortion was no longer covered by Medicaid, and thus made it substantially less accessible for poor women. We are now – in 2012 – at a point where, in approximately 97 percent of counties outside metropolitan areas there are no abortion providers, and "[i]ronically, abortion is probably less accessible today than it was two hundred years ago" (Radosh 2009 31).[10] In the twenty-first century, medical schools can decide to not include abortion procedures in the skills required of students who plan to become gynecologists (Levine 2002: 124),[11] family planning centers will suffer discontinued financial support if they choose to address abortion in any other than negative terms; in some states, doctors are required to misinform women who seek abortion that they "suffer increased risk of suicide by undergoing the procedure" (*Newsday*). Sex education has morphed into "abstinence education" in US schools (although proven to be ineffective in decreasing teen sexual activity or teen pregnancy), supported by special funding from Congress. "Nonmarital sex, educators are required to tell children, 'is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects'" (Levine 2002: 92). Due to the reluctance to include abortion in sex education, many Americans are misinformed both about the history of abortion, and about the procedure as such.[12] In the early 1990s, when researchers ran focus groups on abortion with thirteen-to-nineteen-year-olds, teenagers expressed "erroneous and anecdotal evidence about abortion more often than sound knowledge, portraying the procedure as medically dangerous, emotionally damaging, and widely illegal" (Stone & Waszak, quoted in Levine 2002: 122). Since the 1990s especially, fathers' rights and men's rights movements have also affected the abortion issue; demands for male partners' consent to abortion and the parental consent rule that operates in many counties clearly signal paternalistic attitudes about pregnant women.

These developments are signs that reproductive rights as formulated and fought for by feminists especially in the late 1960s and in the 1970s are suffering a severe and drawn-out backlash. One result of this is a tendency to include anti-abortion arguments and rhetoric into *any* statement about abortion; the "pro-life" rhetoric has influenced even the ways that pro-choice proponents now frame their arguments. For example, because "pro-lifers" claimed that "pro-choicers" were anti-family, as Judith Levine observes, "[a]s early as 1980, American pro-choice feminists started to cast themselves as 'pro-family,' some even implying that if the state provided good child and health care, everyone would want babies, and abortion would become obsolete" (Levine 2002: 120). Hence, abortion is increasingly spoken of, also by supporters of abortion rights, in negative terms, to the point that "by the beginning of the twenty-first century, one can hardly speak of abortion without a note of deep misgiving or regret, if one speaks of it at all" (Levine 2002: 119). Australian scholar Marge Ripper calls this the "awfulisation of abortion" a development that has had the effect of more qualified support, as

well as sinking support for abortion rights in the US; and also has had the effect of making proponents of abortion "its apologists, espousing the arguments of their antagonists, slightly softened: abortion is an evil, though a 'necessary evil'. It is a deeply private 'family' affair and never preferable to contraception." (Levine 2002: 120; Pheterson 2009: 103). In other words, it has become increasingly difficult to speak straightforwardly about abortion as an unconditional right for women. As Luker (1984) demonstrates, the polarization of feminist pro-choice perspectives and the "pro-life" movement was already in place in the 1980s. While many of the same arguments can still be heard, what has developed further since then is the "pro-life" discourse on the rights of the fetus, a discourse that values "the unborn" above the life of the mother and uncannily often separates the fetus from the maternal body. The following discussion centers on the ways that Irving's novel forcefully counters such discourses.

Representing the Issue: *The Cider House Rules*: Abortion, and Gendered Power

Set in New England, *The Cider House Rules* centers on two male protagonists, Wilbur Larch and Homer Wells, in a sprawling and complex plot that stretches from the late nineteenth to the mid twentieth century. At a time when abortion is illegal, Dr. Wilbur Larch – a young gynecologist and obstetrician arrives in Maine to run the St. Cloud's orphanage as well as a covert abortion clinic. He performs abortions from a deeply felt wish to allow women a choice, giving them, in the doctor's own words, "an orphan or an abortion" (Irving 1985: 102). "He was an obstetrician; he delivered babies into the world. His colleagues called this 'the Lord's work.' And he was an abortionist; he delivered mothers, too. His colleagues called this 'the Devil's work,' but it was *all* the Lord's work to Wilbur Larch" (Irving 1985: 93). The other main character in the novel is Homer Wells, born at St. Cloud's in the early 1920s, an orphan whose birth parents are never known. Despite several attempted placements in "proper" families, the boy keeps returning to the orphanage as a result of parental abuse, ignorance, or negligence. Finally, a teenager and the oldest orphan in the boy's division, Homer is trained by Dr. Larch in obstetrics and gynecology, in order to "be of use"; Larch hopes that Homer will continue the abortion practice, but unlike Larch, the young man initially takes a recognizably "pro-life" stance.

The time of Homer's premature medical apprenticeship is also the time of his relationship with St. Cloud's overage orphan girl, Melony, who he promises he will never abandon. However, Homer leaves the orphanage at age 20, invited to come and stay at an apple orchard, Ocean View, with Wally and Candy, a young attractive couple who come to St. Cloud's for an abortion. Melony soon runs away from the orphanage to find her own way and, initially, to find Homer. Over fifteen years pass, during which Homer and Candy have a son, Angel, who they

pretend Homer has adopted. This lie is maintained to spare the feelings of Wally, who returns from World War II an invalid and marries Candy. Life at Ocean View, where Candy and Homer continue their relationship in secret, and seasons are marked by the coming and going of the African-American work crew each fall, is juxtaposed to the continued work of the aging Dr. Larch at St. Cloud's until his death. Finally, Homer is confronted by Melony, who questions his situation based on secrecy and lies, and by the situation of the African American girl Rose Rose, who, pregnant by her own father, needs an abortion. Homer returns to the orphanage to take up the doctor's work as abortionist, teaming up with a Nurse Caroline to "be of use" to women in need.

Ending in 1960, the temporal setting predates the large-scale introduction of the birth control pill which resulted in a drastic drop in numbers of unwanted pregnancies, and abortions (Baker-Sperry 2009: 158). The plot also temporally predates the second wave of the women's movement that among other things would result in the legalization of abortion with *Roe vs. Wade* in 1973. As legal scholar Bruce Rockwood observes, "[w]riting in the 1980s, Irving could easily have portrayed these problems in the lives of contemporary Americans, but by choosing to set the story in the context of American history, he gives both depth and distance to his theme [. . .] allowing us to talk about it in an almost 'objective' voice, by the pretense that we are not, really, talking about ourselves" (Rockwood 1996/2004: 129).

The novel represents abortion as a social practice involving both men and women, and stresses gendered and sexualized positions of empowerment and need. Although as a whole, the narrative is a voice in favor of women's "right to choice," agency is distinctively gendered: women are predominantly patients at the mercy of male physicians (Wilt 1990; Wahlström 2001; Baker-Sperry 2009). Whereas there are both male and female "quack" abortionists in the narrative, when it comes to accurate medical procedure, men are the doctors until the end of the novel, although Nurse Caroline is more of an equal to Homer than Dr. Larch's nurses were to him. Critiquing Irving's assignation of gendered power, Wilt observes that his novel "alone takes up at length the issue *Roe vs. Wade* made key in America: the 'choice' is an affair 'between a woman and her doctor'." To Wilt, this is problematical: "Since men have taken over the medical establishment of the West from midwives, a second male role, a final 'fatherhood,' enters the arena of maternal choice" (Wilt 1990: 118).[13] The novel also represents women characters as central decision-swayers, but not as decision makers. Women's limited power of influence on issues of reproduction may be read as consistent with the actual situation in the US during the time when the novel is set, and hence as "realism," but given its time of publication, it also sets up a tension between its characterization of women and the powerfully vocal women's movement.

Irving continues to stress the power and responsibility of men in abortion policy and debate, when, in an interview organized by Planned Parenthood in Ver-

mont in 2006 he states that "Men who believe in legislating against abortion should watch a few childbirths. It's a painful experience, but it's a great experience – provided it's a wanted child. What man with a conscience wants to put a woman through the experience of childbirth when the child is unwanted?" (Michniewicz 2006). And indeed, although the "saviors" of women in the novel are predominantly men, so are the culprits: the men who "father" children in the strictly biological sense only to abandon them; violent and domineering men who see women alone as responsible for pregnancy. As one critic observes, "Implicit in the text is the tension between the *needs* of *women*, in the words of Dr. Larch, for either an orphan or an abortion [. . .] and the simultaneous *power* (as doctors, judges, lawmakers, and pimps) and *absence* (as fathers) of *men*, who both cause the misery and control the response of society to it" (Rockwood 1996/ 2004: 129). Meanwhile, women are often shadowy figures seeking help, and motherhood is often erased in the narrative.

Towards the end of the novel, however, there is a significant shift when women's voices, and more especially their voicing of needs, demands, and expectations – turn Homer's trajectory back towards St. Cloud's orphanage and hospital. It is the fate of Rose Rose, and Candy's revelation to Homer that "[Rose's] father is the father" (Irving 1985: 694) that makes Homer accept his responsibility to work as an abortionist, and it is Melony's confrontation with Homer after looking for him for 15 years, when she disappointedly states that he is a liar and an adulterer who is "lying to his kid" and "ballin' a poor cripple's wife" (Irving 1985: 612) that brings him to tell Angel the truth about his birth and parentage.

Another central aspect of the novel is that, unlike many of the prolife voices that seem to dominate debates today, it makes abortion almost universal, a part of normative reproduction practices. This representation is true to the reality of abortion in the US — where studies show that all kinds of women have abortions, including "pro-lifers," Catholics, and republicans (Levine 2002: 119). The novel also provides a rather straightforward solution to the issue, based in a realistic and scientifically informed *as well as* women-oriented perspective. I have already stated that the "women-oriented" abortionists' stance on the plot level is complicated by Irving's choice to place men as heroes and women as in need of rescue; the relative erasure of mothers and foregrounding of fathers and sons can certainly also be problematical from a feminist perspective (Wahlström 2013b). However, the novel ends in a "pro-choice" (or pro-reproductive rights) stance, and I would argue that it can be read for progressive feminist purposes on several points.

The first of these is that the novel illustrates that abortion does not preclude or negate motherhood. In this, the novel forcefully counters the image promoted by anti-abortion activists that women who have/support abortion are against motherhood (Luker 1984). Instead, in the novel, a close proximity of abortion and motherhood is established through a variety of narrative strategies, such as the adjacent rooms for births and abortions in the clinic at St. Cloud's; and via characters like

Candy and Rose Rose, as well as numerous unnamed women, who are envisioned both as mothers *and* as women who have abortions. Abortion in *The Cider House Rules* is represented as one element on a reproductive continuum and a part of normal female sexuality. Likewise, the narrative counters the notion that people who favor free abortion are "anti-family." In the words of sociologist Polly Radosh, "[t]o advocate for abortion choice was to advocate against the family in the post-*Roe vs. Wade* political polarization." (Radosh 2009: 29). Instead, the notion of kinship bonds is foregrounded in Irving's novel although it does not favor the nuclear family (Wahlström 2013a).

Importantly, motherhood (like family) carries many different meanings for women in the US; meanings that are inextricably linked to class, race, sexuality, and religion and that for many – but *not* for the majority of women – result in clear political stances for or against abortion as practice (Luker 1984; Radosh 2009). Many feminist scholars have investigated the reproduction/gender/power nexus, and formulated ideas about social change (Cornell 1995; Nelson 2003; Rothmann 2000). Kristin Lukers' crucial study *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (1984) clarifies how conservative and liberal ideas in the early 1980s about meanings of motherhood take shape for "pro-choice" and "pro-life" women activists due to these women's very diverging situations in terms of education, economic status, and religion and how these meanings are forceful factors in the debate over reproduction in the US. The activists' almost diametrically opposed views on motherhood– as women's natural purpose in life, placed in a "separate sphere" that women but not men have access to on the one hand; motherhood as a possible but not necessary and certainly not an exclusive purpose for women, one that can be shared with men, on the other – still circulates in the debates on reproduction today.

Second, the novel rejects a "pro-life" stance and a "fetal rights" perspective in favor of a women's rights perspective. Homer Wells at first lets his view of the embryo as a "person" override his concern for women, and states that he will not perform abortion procedure. However, he later changes his mind, and performs an abortion on the first occasion that a woman – a girl, really – actually asks for his medical expertise; upon the death of Dr. Larch he becomes an abortionist and moves back to St. Cloud's to do "the Lord's work," to "be of use" to women. In this way, Irving places the categorical anti-abortion stance with a protagonist whose change of opinion comes at the same time as his decision to be honest about his parenthood and also his decision to return to the orphanage from the flawed Eden of Ocean View – in other words, Irving shifts Homer over to the pro-choice stance as a part of his growth into responsible adulthood. Importantly, too, abortion is not presented only as a long line of individual cases but also as enmeshed in structural gendered power relations between women, abortionists, and authorities.

According to Luker, the rise of the fetus as a public concern since the 1980s comes from the "visibility of the embryo via new technologies in medical procedure" as well as "improved medical procedure for abortion" combined with the fact that birthrates in the US are among the lowest in the world (Luker 1984: 4). E. Ann Kaplan also suggests that the use of "fetal images" in US film and media since the 1980s signals a deep worry over women's freedom to choose motherhood, or not choose it, and explains the important role of the fetus in the national imaginary as an effect of men's desire to control life and "eradicate the need for woman herself in reproduction" (Kaplan 1994: 34). The fetal rights debate in the US can hence be seen as the continuation of a long tradition of thinking about women's place as reduced to motherhood, but where the female body is erased (Politt 1990). Indeed, an understanding of the fetus as a separate, autonomous human being, as Cornell observes, "rests on the erasure of the woman; it reduces her to a mere environment for the fetus" (Cornell 1995: 48). It has also been pointed out by feminist critics that activists in the fetal rights movement live by a double standard, for while very concerned with the conditions of the fetus, they seem unconcerned about living children who suffer poverty and economic hardship, and little concerned with the hardship of mothers and women. In Irving's novel, Dr. Larch argues with such a stance and proposes more concern for "the born" (Irving 1985: 495). In a letter to Franklin D. Roosevelt, he writes:

> These same people who tell us we must defend the lives of the unborn – they are the same people who seem not so interested in defending anyone but themselves after the accident of birth is complete! These same people who profess their love for the unborn's soul – they don't care to make much of a contribution to the poor, they don't care to offer much assistance to the unwanted or the oppressed! How do they justify such a concern for the fetus and such a lack of concern for the unwanted and abused children? They condemn others for the accident of conception; they condemn the poor – as if the poor can help being poor. One way the poor could help themselves would be to be in control of the size of their families. I thought that freedom of choice was obviously democratic – was obviously American! (Irving 1985: 488)

The Hyde amendment, which withdrew Medicaid funding of abortion and left the poorest women (incidentally also disproportionately women of color) without access to abortion, was already in effect as Irving wrote his novel. Today, Dr. Larch's words have gained new significance, given the development of the fetal rights movement in the US in the past two decades, which among other things has resulted in new forms of criminalization of maternal behaviors, with addicted mothers being arrested for providing illegal substances to minors (the children they carry), and in some instances being incarcerated upon delivery of their baby (Pollitt 1990/1998).

Finally, medically sound abortion procedure is represented in the novel – in spite of the fact that moral issues are continuously discussed by the central male characters in the book – as primarily a women's health issue and a political issue that also has effects for men and for children. Representing abortion as finally

more a health issue and a political issue than a moral issue, the novel in a sense combines two temporally located strains: on the one hand, it returns to the time when male medical professionals were leading the debate on reproduction/abortion; on the other it lands in the present of the time post-*Roe vs. Wade*, when abortion was formulated by feminists as a gender-political issue. It also firmly represents abortion as a social issue, since the availability of abortion to all women is a central point, illustrated not least by the many cases of women who experience botched "back-alley" abortions or who attempt to end their own pregnancies, often with fatal results for themselves. Read in the current context of the continued and seemingly ever louder debate over reproductive rights in the US, and of conservative twenty-first century policies regarding sexual education and family planning, Irving's novel complicates all these issues but ends in a clear support for women's right to access abortion; hence, in spite of its gendered tensions, the novel may even be seen as doing feminist work (Wahlström 2004).

Addressing the Issue: *The Cider House Rules* and the Critics

The Cider House Rules is, then, a novel that treats abortion unusually insistently and explicitly, and not only in negative terms; the narrative does not reproduce the otherwise culturally dominant "awfulization of abortion." However, such awfulization does have effects on the criticism of *The Cider House Rules*. Having read the available research on the novel, I have selected the studies that specifically address abortion and reproduction for analysis here. In the following discussion, I introduce these studies. As I will demonstrate, the simultaneous presence of women's rights discourses and a "fetal rights" discourse sometimes creates problematical tensions even in criticism that proceeds from an expressly feminist perspective.

Irving's novel got generally good reviews upon publication, but the theme of abortion was apparently problematical for some critics. One example of this was a review which claimed that the novel demonstrates how "the history of compassion cannot have a stop and must perpetually demand larger generosities than those hitherto conceived. By responding to that demand we may, tomorrow, invent ways to abolish *nightmare choices between born and unborn*." (DeMott, quoted in Davis & Womack 2004: 15; emphases added). While the first sentence is vague and curiously disembodied, the second one establishes that abortion is a "nightmare choice," although it is not really represented as such in Irving's novel. Another reviewer sees the novel as having "force and integrity," but in his wording – "doctors mustn't *commit* abortions" – the reviewer rhetorically aligns himself with a perspective that equals abortion with crime (Lehmann-Haupt 2004: 120).

In the decades since the publication of the novel, literary and cultural scholarship has addressed its abortion problematic variously, but often in ways marked by reluctance or negativity. To Todd Davis and Kenneth Womack, Larch and

Homer's "debate over the morality of abortion exists as a microcosm for the much larger, although *equally disjunctive*, dispute that occurs on national and international stages *across the globe*" (Davis and Womack 2004: 14; emphases added). By positing the opinions of Homer and Larch as a "disjunctive dispute" these critics fail to stress the ultimate agreement between the two male protagonists in terms of practice (while also situating "the issue" on a global scale, rather than in a specifically US context). Josie Campbell's scholarly introduction to the novel is unremarkable except in its wording; the critic claims that the novel ends in "tragedy" and "compromise all around," and that "[o]nly Angel (*whose parents chose not to abort him*) [*sic*!] lives in love and happiness" (Campbell 1998: 123; emphases added). Although it is perhaps difficult to agree with Irving's own suggestion that the novel has a "triumphant ending" (Michniewicz 2006), like the novel as a whole, the ending actually offers a positive vision of combining family life and working life and for expanding conventional definitions of family and parenthood (Wahlström 2013a).[14] Campbell's response to the novel's ending rings of the anti-abortion rhetoric, where abortion practice is automatically anti-family and anti-children; abortion is always a "tragedy," if not an outright crime.[15]

In the first full-length study on representations of abortion and motherhood in English language literature, Judith Wilt stated – in the late 1980s – that she was aware of "a new spirit abroad, as *Roe vs. Wade* comes under increasing attack: a spirit which would delegitimize the rough and multiplex female experience that went into the abortion law reform movement in favor of more totalizing perspectives of law or art" (Wilt 1990: xii). We now know that Wilt's prognosis on the times was correct; there was indeed a new "spirit abroad." Whereas reproduction issues are social issues that have everything to do with gender and power, many recent studies treat reproduction and abortion only as moral or moral-philosophical issues, shying away from the links between poverty, race/ethnicity, and reproductive rights (Brent 1996; Koloze 2005; Arp 2008). Indeed, in some of these, women hardly figure at all, demonstrating the uncanny separation of woman/mother and embryo typical of the "fetal rights" discourse that has been critiqued by feminists (Cornell 1995; Pollitt 1990/1998). Even studies that explicitly profess a pro-women's rights perspective at times draw upon the ideational framework of anti-abortion proponents.

Recent contributions to criticism on *The Cider House Rules* illustrate this tendency. Pro-life advocate Jeff Koloze's study *An Ethical Analysis of the Portrayal of Abortion in American Fiction* (2005), frames the novel as detrimental and lacking a Christian moral compass; it is also seen as consistent with representations of abortion in US fiction by major male writers, since it contains three themes Koloze defines as central to such representations:

> First, parenthood and children are further devalued in explicit terms of either worth to the larger society or worth to their parents. Second, a disrespectful attitude towards the Roman Catholic Church or an often-strident anti-Catholicism is evident in

> recent fiction. Finally, opponents of abortion are demonized and marginalized in an effort to categorize such opinions as out of the mainstream of American life. (Koloze 2005: 250)

While Koloze's observation that anti-abortionists are villains generally applies to Irving's novel, it hardly applies to young Homer, and as already mentioned the novel does not devalue family, parenthood, or children. Koloze makes the point that Irving's novel seems morally divided or undecided; however, it does not create "schizophrenia" as he claims, but, as discussed previously, the narrative lands in a firmly pro-women's rights standpoint. In a novel that maximizes the presence of abortion in the narrative, it seems strange to claim that the narrator attempts to "minimize abortion" (Koloze 2005: e.g. 215, 216). It is, however, evident that the critic himself minimizes abortion as a reproductive rights issue. He does this by stating for example that "[i]f women became pregnant under less-than-perfect circumstances, some twentieth-century fiction suggested that abortion could be a viable, indeed a suitable, alternative to the social disgrace of being pregnant out of wedlock," which has little relevance for Irving's novel, where abortion certainly is not only sought to avoid "social disgrace," and where the circumstances of women who seek abortion are often much more serious than the phrase "less-than-perfect" suggests.

Koloze mentions that Larch wants to deliver babies, but also to "deliver women" – "his euphemistic term for performing abortions" (Koloze 2005: 212). He never goes further into the issue of helping women; instead, Koloze focuses on Larch and Homer's decisions to "Play God" as abortionists, thereby rather effectively erasing women from his own discussion. It is not surprising, perhaps, that a pro-life advocate attempts to cast women who have abortions as selfish; this is common anti-abortion rhetoric, as is the lack of recognition for women as gendered beings *beyond* motherhood.[16]

In a reading that contrasts greatly with Koloze's, Janet Engstrom and Ramona Hunter state that it "would be impossible to read [Irving's] book and not be moved by its relevance to women's health" (Engstrom and Hunter 2007: 467). In their article "Teaching Reproductive Options Through the Use of Fiction: The *Cider House Rules* Project" (2007) Irving's bestseller is useful literature in concrete terms. Engstrom and Hunter teach women's and children's health and family nursing and read the novel within the framework of a pedagogical project involving future health care professionals.

> There are many issues in this book that are relevant to reproductive and overall health. The obvious issues relate to contraception and its availability and the absence of safe and legal abortion services. But, like any good novel, the book includes many stories, many of which relate to sexuality and unintended pregnancy such as adultery, incest, sexual orientation, sexually transmitted infections, substance abuse, domestic violence, racism, parenting, dishonesty in describing reproductive options, lack of access to reproductive services, and poverty. All these issues can have a profound effect on women's health. (Engstrom and Hunter 2007: 469)

Engstrom and Hunter's paper argues for the benefits of using complex fictional narratives to teach students about complex life issues. Stories, they contend, can be "helpful in developing critical thinking, cultural sensitivity, and emotional intelligence" because they can "provide insight into *worlds that are unknown and unimagined*, thereby helping students understand circumstances and experiences that they may never personally encounter" (Engstrom & Hunter 2007: 465, emphases added). Stories, in other words, offer "alternative realities" that broaden the scope of students' experiences, albeit in fictional form. This, however, suggests that in the specific case of *The Cider House Rules*, abortion is an "unknown world" for students, and the novel is taught to "sensitize" students to the experiences of "others" – women who may need abortions.

Although there are many interesting elements in the article, I will only point to a few of them here. The first is that the authors formulate the "moral dilemma" posed by Irving's story as "whether safe abortion procedures should be provided to women even when the procedure is illegal or whether women should be left to their own devices and seek and accept unsafe abortion care" (Engstrom & Hunter 2007: 467). This raises the question whether this *can* be the central dilemma for the contemporary American reader, who reads within a context when abortion (although difficult to access in a majority of counties today) is *not* illegal. Formulating the moral dilemma in this way stresses the "illegality" of abortion procedure. This may or may not run counter to the ideas of the writers, who are overall very supportive of access to a broad range of health care to women, but in fact refrain from expressing any direct support for abortion procedure. Nevertheless, they point out that while Homer and Dr. Larch "argue the issues for and against abortion in multiple encounters throughout the book [. . .] the women kept coming. Slowly, the reader becomes aware that the deeper moral dilemma of the novel has to do with depriving women access to safe reproductive services, including abortion" (Engstrom & Hunter 2007: 467). But abortion access is still described as a "dilemma," not a clear stance, in the novel. Carefully, Engstrom and Hunter then suggest that in the novel, "there are repeated instances of people who just 'wait and see' [. . .] in essence, doing nothing" and that "the book challenges students [to] "be of use" [. . .] to do something to help women" (Engstrom & Hunter 2007: 469) but avoid suggesting what that "something" might entail. Clearly reluctant to position themselves regarding abortion procedure, the writers of the article claim that the novel does not take sides concerning abortion rights:

> Many readers may assume that the moral of the story is the same as the moral dilemma posed by the story – that is, the issue of whether abortion is right or wrong, or the tension between the needs of the conceptus and those of the mother. *But there is no answer to that question in this book.* (468)

"That question" is in fact two questions, and while the first (moral) one may not be clearly answered in Irving's novel, the second (social, political) one certainly is. The carefulness and the seeming neutrality of Engstrom and Hunter's uses of

the novel signal the fraught nature of the abortion issue; the dominance of abortion-as-negativity finally seems to be directing several of their findings concerning Irving's novel, resulting in their claim that the needs of the "conceptus" are represented as being as great as those of women walking to St. Cloud's.

Unlike Engstrom and Hunter, sociologist Lori Baker-Sperry's study "Orphans, Abortions and the Public Fetus in *The Cider House Rules*" expressly sets out to show that "the social story clarified in *The Cider House Rules* is one that is consistent with the political and moral debate surrounding reproduction and abortion in the U.S. today" (Baker-Sperry 2009: 147) and hence signals aims similar to those of the present article. However, as in the previous example, although this is an instance of explicitly feminist critique, ideational goods from the anti-abortion advocates, especially the fetal-rights discourse, enters in ways that create ambivalence in the text.[17]

Baker-Sperry makes some very relevant observations concerning representations of gender and power in the novel, and their links to the current "political and moral debate," for example that "*The Cider House Rules* is really about a man's world with abortion as its topic of interest [. . .] men in the U.S. hold positions of power: political, medical, etc., and have significant control over the availability of abortion services [. . .] much of the abortion question today is answered by men and a male perspective" (Baker-Sperry 2009: 165). She also comments on the problematic lack of access to factual information about abortion and reproduction in the US, noting that "Irving clearly traces the connections between education about birth control, the birth rate, the abortion rate in St. Cloud's." Baker-Sperry is critical of the focus on "abstinence education" in US schools, and suggest that "possibly the most frightening element of the abortion question is our lack of real, clear, and accessible information about sex, sexuality, and birth control" (Baker-Sperry 2009: 168). Also, she notes that Larch as a character conveys that "the culprit is not illicit sex but the mistreatment of women" (Baker-Sperry 2009: 168). However, she ignores the shift Homer undergoes from pro-life to pro-choice, stressing instead the differences between Larch and Homer in assigning responsibility for abortion:

> Interestingly, those who Larch holds most responsible are not likely the women themselves, but the men he believes should have helped them, including his early self. The current pro-life (anti-abortion) position, depicted in Homer's character, also addresses the issues of blame [. . .] Homer did not blame Larch for performing abortions per se, and the text leads the reader to believe that Homer understood some of Larch's motivation [. . .] Homer, however, does not absolve Larch from responsibility, nor does he reserve blame for the (often missing) men, as he holds the mothers accountable as well – he believes abortion to be a woman shirking personal responsibility. (Baker-Sperry 2009: 153)

Most importantly, Baker-Sperry sees Irving's novel as "carefully constructing the characters of the women, *juxtaposed with Homer as walking, public fetus*" (Baker-Sperry 2009: 160, emphases added). Although the issue of the fetus as a

person is initially raised by Baker-Sperry as highly problematical, her analysis here aligns itself with the discourse of "fetal rights" where the fetus is understood a living, separate human being. But in Irving's novel Homer is an orphan, not a fetus. Although Homer as a child is confused about the boundaries between fetus and orphan, he recognizes that his life as an orphan may be a coincidence, and – also in his childhood years – thinks that the ill orphan boy Fuzzy Stone "looks like a fetus," the novel as a whole does not confuse fetuses with orphans; it does not confuse "fetuses" with "people." It is also clear in its representations of the women who come to St. Clouds, at times visibly pregnant and there to give birth, or not visibly pregnant, and there for an abortion. These women, who often meet young Homer, relate to him as a child or a man, not as a "walking fetus," and Irving indeed makes a point of how Homer relates to the women differently than does Dr. Larch: whereas Larch tends to "overlook women" at St. Cloud's, "Homer Wells did not overlook women; he looked right into their eyes" and indeed is often represented as sympathizing with women (Irving 1985: 249). Here, then, Baker-Sperry positions Homer in opposition to women in a way that the novel itself does not.

Conclusion

> [T]he abortion debate has become a debate about women's contrasting obligations to themselves and others. New technologies and the changing nature of work have opened up possibilities for women outside the home undreamed of in the nineteenth century; together, these changes give women – for the first time in history – the option of deciding exactly how and when their family roles will fit into the larger context of their lives. In essence, therefore, this round of the abortion debate is so passionate and hard-fought *because it is a referendum on the place and meaning of motherhood*. (Luker 1984: 193, emphases original)

Twenty-first century criticism of Irving's text, exemplified by feminist scholars as well as explicitly anti-feminist pro-life advocates, illustrates how readings of Irving's novel include, or reactively respond to, the fetal rights discourse and the "awfulization of abortion." In the words of Judith Levine, "by the beginning of the twenty-first century, *one can hardly speak of abortion without a note of deep misgiving or regret, if one speaks of it at all*. 'Abortion on demand and without apology,' a feminist demand before *Roe*, is as rare in 1999 as it was in 1959." (Levine 2002: 119, emphases added). Luker suggested in the 1980s that the ferocity of the abortion debate then signaled an ongoing struggle over the meaning of motherhood; as it was then, the abortion debate in our present is therefore also a struggle over meanings of "femininity" as such.

In the US, motherhood has been upheld as women's patriotic duty and natural calling for centuries – including the present one: "an idealized model of motherhood, derived from the situation of the white, American, middle class, has been projected as universal.[18] In this model, responsibility for mothering rests almost

exclusively on one woman (the biological mother), for whom it constitutes the primary if not sole mission during the child's formative years" (Glenn et al. 1994: 3). Abortion obviously disrupts this image of women as "mothers-only." In the words of cultural critic Katha Pollitt, the "fetal rights" rhetoric signals

> [. . .] deep discomfort with the notion of women as self-directed social beings, for whom parenthood is only one aspect of life, as it has always been for men. Never mind that in the real world, women still want children, have children, and take care of children, often under the most discouraging circumstances and at tremendous emotional, economic, and physical cost. There is still a vague but powerful cultural fear that one of these days, women will just walk out on the whole business of motherhood and the large helpings of humble pie we have, as a society, built into that task. And then where will we be? (Pollitt 1990/1998: 296-97)

The re-mobilization of conservative American "family values" in the post-9/11 period is traced in Susan Faludi's *The Terror Dream* (2007). At this time, media representations increasingly focused on women as mothers who by giving birth to a new generation of Americans provided hope for the nation, and on American men as rescuers and heroes who would save women and children. These are also "hard times" of financial and social hardship in the nation, when Americans are called upon to be patriotic and stand together as "one American family,"[19] and such framing of the national context, such a "national imaginary," provides little space for the legitimacy of abortion practice. What Irving's novel stresses is that the rights of women – "the born" – need to be voiced again and again, preferably without borrowing the rhythms of anti-abortionist rhetoric.

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Notes

[1]   The US Presidential campaign of 2012.
[2]   The expression was coined by Hadley (1998) and elaborated by Ripper (1996); see also Pheterson 2009.
[3]   What is striking about the situation in the US, seen from my own secular Swedish perspective, is both the strong Christian bent of the national politics, but also the seeming lack of

basic knowledge about sex and reproduction. The recent election campaigns witnessed several infamous statements by Republican politicians, including Congressman Todd Akin's claim that legal abortion is unnecessary as a measure for terminating unwanted pregnancies that result from "legitimate rape," [*sic*!] since women cannot become pregnant when raped (Saletan). Even a minimal analysis of this astonishing statement leads to the conclusion that information and education about conception, contraception and abortion, while not generally available in the US (Levine 2002), when available – as it should be to highly educated men with considerable social power (such as Congressmen) is not necessarily acquired, which makes informed decisions difficult to make.

4 Film and abortion has been addressed by some scholars, and the filmatization of Irving's novel also figures in a few studies. However, I stay with the original novel here and leave cinematic representation for another study. For insightful analyses, see e. g. Kaplan (1994) on 1980s film and "fetal rights"; MacGibbon (2006) on abortion as tragedy in US film of the early twentieth century. The film version of *The Cider House Rules* (1999), although maintaining abortion as a central theme, is a seriously watered-down version of the book; however, for an interesting feminist study of the film, see Booth (2002). As one critic observes, in Hollywood, "if a pregnancy lasts on screen, abortion is never an option and always a tragedy. Indeed, the A-word is rarely even uttered." (Levine 2002: 120)

5 The so called Comstock Law, or *An Act for the Suppression of Trade in, and Circulation of, Obscene Literature and Articles of Immoral Use*, was enacted in 1873, and upheld by the Supreme Court into the 1960s. Its purpose was to stop the spread of information about contraception or abortion expressly to hinder adultery and divorce, but also to enforce the responsibility of women to "the duties imposed on her by the marriage contract." Later, in order to save the population from moral corruption, the law expanded into an effective censorship of "obscenity" in literature and film, as well.

6 On Irving's status as a major writer, see Davis and Womack 2004: 1.

7 The difference between rightful law and "rules" is the topic of a study on *The Cider House Rules* from 1996, where legal scholar Bruce Rockwood looks at US abortion laws, to argue that "*Roe v. Wade* was a unique statement of moral principle linked to clear, pragmatic brightline rules based on the trimester system set out by Justice Blackmun that included, for the first time, the concerns of women in constitutional discourse as a fundamental right. *Webster*, *Rust*, and *Casey*, and all other decisions which cut back on *Roe*, are just cider house rules" (Rockwood 1996; 2004: 139). Another critic notes that "[t]he woman has completely dropped out of the picture as a source of concern in the post-*Roe* cases" (Cornell 1995: 59).

8 "From 1993 to 1997, the Justice department recorded more than fifty bombings and arson attacks at abortion clinics, and from 1993 to 1999, seven people, including clinic workers and doctors, were killed by anti-abortion terrorism" (Levine 2002: 118).

9 The title of course echoes that of the infamous anti-abortion film "The Silent Scream" (1984).

10 For reports on development of abortion access in the US in recent years, see for example *The New York Times* online; http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/a/abortion/; for statistics on teen pregnancy, abortion statistics in the US compared to other nations, and sex education in the US, see for example the Guttmacher Institute; www.guttmacher.org.

11 "Almost a third of obstetrics and gynecology residencies failed to teach abortion procedures in 1992" (Levine 2002: 124).

12 The 1995 survey of state laws on sexual educations conducted by the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) found that only nine states specifically named abortion in their sex-ed statutes. Of these, only Vermont required giving students neutral information on the procedure; the others either forbade teachers from talking about abortion as a reproductive health method or allowed discussing its negative consequences only. (Levine 2002: 122-3)

13 She continues: "Excluded from the maternal scene as 'the father,' man comes back to take control as 'the doctor' . . . But whose doctor is he? Is he the mother's instrument? The father's? The state's?" (Wilt 1990: 129).

[14] On domestic spaces as work spaces in the film, see Booth (2002).

[15] Writing about the film version of Irving's novel, critics again deal with abortion only reluctantly. For example, Film Studies scholar Robert Arp seems somewhat conflicted about his own professed "pro-choice" stance, ending his article by telling presumptive readers/students that: "if someone had chosen to abort you, you wouldn't have been here to ponder these issues!" (Arp 2008: 31).

[16] Koloze's analysis of the text is deeply problematical for gender-political reasons, but also because of its poor scholarship; there are numerous inaccuracies in the description of the very plot development.

[17] Other discourses also compete in this article. Baker-Sperry's discussion about women reproducing while men are "in business" in *The Cider House Rules,* which strengthens the notion of "separate spheres" is not true to the representation of gender and work in the novel (Baker-Sperry 2009: 165-6); homophobia – or at least heterosexual normativity – may explain why she claims that Melony dies "angry and frustrated, despondent and unsatisfied" (Baker-Sperry 2009: 166) when we are told that Melony's lover Lorna writes Homer and tells him that Melony died "relatively happy" (Irving 1985: 717).

[18] The US is not singular in the way it treats women and mothers as bearers of the nation, for woman-as-mother is the most highly valued aspect of femininity in patriarchal societies across the world (Therborn 2004). In many nationalist projects, women are mainly valued in their role as reproducers of the nation's (right) citizens; that is, their maternal function overrides their personhood, and conversely, if women are not mothers, they are not proper citizens (Cornell 1995; Tyler May 1997; Yuval-Davis 1997; Eduards 2007).

[19] An idea repeated by most US Presidents, including Barack Obama in his victory speech 2012.

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Sex Dilemmas, Amazons and Cyborgs:
Feminist Cultural Studies and Sport

By Helena Tolvhed

Abstract

In this article, I discuss sport and physical activities as a field of empirical investigation for feminist cultural studies with a potential to contribute to theorizing the body, gender and difference. Sport has, historically, served to legitimize and reinforce the gender dichotomy by making men "masculine" through developing physical strength and endurance, while women generally have been excluded or directed towards activities fostering a "feminine suppleness". The recent case of runner Caster Semenya, who was subjected to extensive gender tests, demonstrates how athletic superiority and "masculine" attributes in women still today stir public emotions and evoke cultural anxieties of gender blurring. But the rigid gender boundaries have also made sport a field of transgressions. From the "Soviet amazon" of the Cold War, transgressions in sport have publicly demonstrated, but also pushed, the boundaries of cultural understandings of gender. Gender verification tests have exposed a continuum of bodies that cannot easily be arranged into two stable, separate gender categories.

In spite of the so called "corporeal turn", sport is still rather neglected within cultural studies and feminist research. This appears to be linked to a degradation, and fear, of the body and of the risk that women – once again – be reduced to biology and physical capacity. But studies of sport might further develop understandings of the processes through which embodied knowledge and subjectivity is produced, in a way that overcomes the split between corporeality and discursive regimes or representations. Furthermore, with the fitness upsurge since the 1980s, the athletic female body has emerged as a cultural ideal and a rare validation of "female masculinity" (Halberstam) in popular culture. This is an area well-suited for "third wave" feminist cultural studies that are at ease with complexities and contradictions: the practices and commercialized images of the sportswoman are potentially both oppressive and empowering.

Keywords: Cultural studies, history, gender, body, sport, feminist theory.

Introduction

Already in *A vindication of the rights of women* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft connected physical strength to women's emancipation. She explains that women cannot achieve recognition of their rights without having access to physical activities that enables them to become strong and resilient. Also feminist intellectual Charlotte Perkins Gilman, active in the decades around the 1900s, emphasized the importance of reclaiming the body through focusing on health and exercise for women. The monopolization and masculinization of leisure activities such as sport was, in her view, crucial in upholding patriarchy (Vertinsky 2001).

However, not much scholarly work within mainstream feminist and cultural studies has been devoted to the subject of sport and physical recreation. In this article, I discuss sport as a field of investigation in feminist cultural studies, with a particular attention to the sportswoman as a transgressing creature. Through a historical perspective on sport as an arena for constructing and legitimizing gender, but correspondingly also for gender "troubling", I will discuss how studies of sport and physical activities contribute to the theorizing of body, gender and difference. The sportswoman continues to pose a challenge to established gender relations and dichotomies; nature/culture, mind/body, masculine/feminine, man/woman, flesh/representation. From the "Soviet amazon" of the Cold War, to more recent cases of submitting women to gender tests, transgressions in sport have publicly demonstrated and pushed the boundaries of cultural understandings of gender.

Sport – in its regulations and established practices as well as journalism – is a context in which gender is tightly held in place. Since competitions are divided into men's and women's events in a way that assume a strict gender binary, there are few other arenas in which so much work is put into affirming that each body fits firmly into a male or female category (Cavanagh & Sykes 2006; Sloop 2012: 91). Hence, ideas on sexual difference, masculinity and femininity are constantly reproduced and legitimized here. There is also a consistent gender hierarchy, manifest in the unequal allocation of economic resources, access to sports halls and media attention. Gender distinction is institutionalized, with separate institutions and events for male and female sport respectively, or joint regulatory bodies of sport such as the international football association FIFA and the Olympic IOC being overwhelmingly male dominated (and certainly for FIFA, with male sport being the norm and primary focus of attention as well as economic resources). The routine division of male and female athletes is seldom questioned even in sports where physical strength has little or no impact, like for example shooting (Kimmel & Messner 1995: 104-112).

Women's Sport: A Present Past

In the Olympic Games in London 2012, women's boxing premiered as an Olympic sport. This is the latest step in a history where more and more sports and events for women gradually have been added to the Olympic program. This has been a protracted process characterized by struggles and setbacks. In the Olympic Games in Amsterdam in 1928, women were allowed for the first time to compete in track-and-field events. This came about after efforts made during the 1920s, where demands of more Olympic sports and events for women were voiced by the international association for women's sport, *Federation Sportive Feminine Internationale* (FSFI). The movement for women's sport was clearly inspired by the recent achievements regarding women's political and labor rights in Europe and the United States. The event "Women's Olympics" had been organized in Paris in 1922 and Gothenburg in 1926 to protest the exclusion of women, and especially women's athletics, from the official Olympic Games (Kidd 2005: 148; Tolvhed 2008a).

As a direct result of these actions, the first Olympic 800-metre race for women was held in Amsterdam 1928. However, not everyone liked what they saw; women in strained competition, sweating and breathing heavily. A few of the contestants threw themselves on the ground in exhaustion after crossing the finish line, causing heated feelings in an audience not used to seeing women publicly displaying such a state. The race sparked a debate on women and sport that led to the discontinuation of the 800-meter event, which was not reinstated until the 1960 Olympics in Rome (Bornholdt 2010: 1-15). Until 1960, women ran no longer than 200 meters in the Olympics. The first Olympic marathon for women took place in 1984, after years of once again debating the limits of the female body's capabilities – a discussion that in many ways paralleled the one on women's track-and-field events in the 1920s.

Sport is, I would argue, a sphere where the marks of history are still very much present, and not the least so on the issue of gender. Throughout the history of modern sport, it has been claimed that sport poses a danger to the female organism, deemed not to be suited for such demanding activity. Activities requiring – but, notably, at the same time also displaying and developing – upper body strength, endurance and speed have generally been the most controversial. The characteristics and body type that sport promotes and foster – toned muscles, competitiveness, assertiveness and aggression – defies traditional notions of femininity. The discussion on women and sport has been fraught by moral arguments, deeply motivated by a fear of blurring the gender categories and, in the long run, the established and familiar social order (Hargreaves 1994; Cahn 1995; Tolvhed 2008b). Female reproductive organs have been placed at the center of anxieties: might they be irreparably damaged by demanding physical exercises, hence endangering the future of the population and the nation?

At the root of the cultural tensions surrounding the sports woman is a history of sport closely associated with men and masculinity. Modern sport was developed from the mid-1800s onward, beginning in Great Britain's Public schools for boys as part of the fostering of future leaders and administrators of the Empire, and then gradually taken up more broadly throughout Europe and the United States. From the very beginning, sport was a politically useful resource to mark and manifest differences based on nation, gender and class. It has been used for training and shaping soldiers and "manly characters", and it has bridged the gap between public and private by providing national symbols – athletes – with whom to identify in the "friendly rivalry" between nations on the sports arenas. (Hobsbawm 1994: 142, 143; Mangan 1995: 1-9). Sport would foster gentlemanly behavior and respect for hierarchies, and with its emphasis on efficiency, measurability, records and competition it was particularly well suited to modern commercial and industrial capitalist society (Bonde 1991; Oriard 1993; Bederman 1995; Kimmel 1996; Mangan 2012a).

For women however, nationalist ideology prescribed a different role. Instead of defending the nation, their task was to reproduce and sustain it with their bodies and care work (Yuval-Davis 1997: 47). As gender historians have pointed out, it might not be purely coincidental that sport was established as a separate, masculine room at a time when the demands for women's rights were first being voiced during the so called first wave of feminism in the later decades of the 19th Century. The Social Darwinist medical science of the time, however, prescribed that women's energy should be reserved for motherhood, and "excessive" exercise was linked to physical, mental and moral problems. The lingering bourgeois ideal of femininity – a slender, passive and physically weak body – has continued to make women's sport controversial well into the 20th century (Atkinson 1987; Mangan 1989; Hargreaves 1994; Vertinsky 1994; Cahn 1995; Hartman-Tews & Pfister 2003: 267-268).

Gender has saturated the organization of and activities within the sports movement, as well as boys and girls physical education in schools (Olofsson 1989; Trangbæck 1998; Lundqvist Wanneberg 2004). Historian Kerstin Bornholdt's thesis (2010) explores how medical knowledge about women and sports was developed in Norway, Denmark and Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, a first break-through and formative period for women's sport. Reports were written, conferences staged, and committees founded in order to find and formulate guidelines for women's sports. What exercises were they able to perform? How far could, and should, they be allowed to run? Medical experts held a powerful position in the debate, and their arguments were heavily influenced by the ethics and social requirements of the times. Female doctors were subjugated to the leading male specialists, especially the all-male gynecologist profession, and doctors generally took little notice of the subjective experiences of their female patients. For example, it was – contrary to what is known today – believed that female athletes had

difficulty giving birth due to their supposedly narrow pelvises, and that sports training could make them sterile. As an alternative to sport and a "more suitable" form of physical exercise, a separate women's gymnastics was introduced at this time. Through rhythmic gymnastics women were to be fostered into a femininity that, paradoxically, was simultaneously imagined as natural to them (Bornholdt 2010). It was not until the 1970s, under the influence of the second wave of feminism, that action for gender equality began to be taken within the Swedish sport movement (Olofsson 1989).

The Female Athlete – Pushing the Boundaries

The history of sport is, then, masculinized as well as patriarchal. But it is, importantly, precisely this history that has charged sport with a subversive and radical potential when performed by female bodies. Judith Butler has discussed women's sports as a challenge to dominating ideals of femininity, pressing the boundaries of gender. Calling the sportswoman a "queer body" that raises questions about physical naturalities, she claims women's sport to be "one of the most dramatic ways in which [conflicting gender ideals] are staged and negotiated in the public sphere" (Butler 1998).

One of the pioneering historical works on women and sport, the anthology *From 'Fair' Sex to Feminism* published in 1987, stresses how sport has contributed to the challenging and dislodging of accepted beliefs and practices of subordination. Similarly, Jennifer Hargreaves have pointed out that sport, like other forms of popular culture, can both affirm hegemonic relations of power and be a site for emancipation and resistance (Hargreaves 1994; also Mangan 2012b: 375). Already in the 1800s, some physical educators and medical doctors of both genders in Europe as well as in the U.S. held positive attitudes towards women's sport. Arguments often centered on the benefits of physical activities to child bearing and motherhood, but more radical voices regarded sport as a way of strengthening the modern woman and accelerate her emancipation to a full citizen and a productive part of the labor force (Vertinsky 1994; Bornholdt 2010). My own research on all-female and explicitly feminist sport federation Svenska Kvinnors Centralförbund för Fysisk Kultur (Swedish Women's Federation for Physical Culture), provides an example. Formed in 1924 and active until the mid-1930s, this separatist, all-female federation regarded women's access to sport and physical culture as a citizen's right, but also as instrumental to their aspirations and visions of a continuing process of women's emancipation and integration into society (Tolvhed 2012a).

Historically, one of the ways to culturally negotiate the perceived threat of women's masculinization through sport – thought of as a danger to existing (patriarchal) society – has been to project the fears onto someone else. The Cold War presented the perfect targets in the shape of female athletes from the communist

bloc, especially the cultural figure/fantasy of the sexually ambiguous "Soviet amazon". Through a maneuver where the "communist woman" was contrasted to the women of the "free world", the message that Swedish and Western female Olympians – despite being involved in sports – would not pose any threat to the established gender order was made clear (Tolvhed 2008b; 2012b). In the American context, Cahn has explained how images of mannish sport women were displaced onto Soviet "Amazons" in a way that also linked Western femininity and the stereotypical "American family" to progress and prosperity (Cahn 1995: 132, 133). C.L. Cole has named Soviet track and field athlete Tamara Press "America's most prominent figure of communist femininity" and explained her as a fantasy that reflected cultural anxieties of gender confusion as well as the political threat of the Cold War conflict between the two superpowers (Cole 2006: 347).

This use of traditional femininity as a "defense" towards suspicions of transgressions of gender and sexuality can still be seen today. Sexualization of the female, but increasingly also the male, athlete is a prominent part of sport's adjustment to market conditions and increasing commercial potential in late modern capitalist society (Lundkvist Wanneberg 2011). In Sweden, this has perhaps been most obvious in ladies football. In the 2000s, exhibiting femininity and feminine bodies – for example in the marketing of football team LdB football Club Malmö or sportswomen posing for men's magazines – are occurring, albeit not uncontroversial, PR-strategies. Although the "pornification" has emerged as a new feature, the underlying argument is familiar: the public is assured that these are normal, heterosexual women – in spite of their athleticism (Tolvhed 2008b).

However, organized sports are not the only, or even the most dominant, form of physical exercise today. Cultural views on the female body with regards to muscularity and strength were fundamentally altered by the emergence and growth of gym and fitness culture in the 1970s and 1980s. This brought something historically new and unique: the fit and "toned" female body ideal (Bordo 1993; Markula 2001; Heywood & Dworkin 2003; Dworkin & Wachs 2009). However, the implications of this ideal for feminist politics is debated, and a dividing line between feminists of the second and third wave can be discerned. Although they both largely agree on the fact that athletic young women are sexualized, some of todays "third wavers" – the "post-feminists", some might say – identifies a subversive element to this. Heywood and Dworkin argues that the growing importance of the female consumer made the athletic woman an iconic figure in commercials and fashion photography during the 1990s, in a way that has challenged assumptions of female weakness and inferiority. Although acknowledging that a gender binary, where men are larger and more muscular than females, is still present, Heywood and Dworkin identify this as a redefinition of femininity. Their nuanced reading of the female athlete as a cultural icon concludes that she is, after all, substantially different from "waify Calvin Klein or silicon-enhanced Victoria's Secret models" (Heywood & Dworkin 2003: xxix).

Heywood and Dworkin also argue against a second wave feminist position that is critical of sport and athletic performances altogether, deeming it fundamentally male-defined with an emphasis on competition, hierarchy and aggression. I agree with them that this standpoint in a problematic way assumes essentialist separatism; the existence of supposedly more peaceful and equal "female values" (Heywood & Dworkin 2003:7-9). The third wave feminist position embraces the contradictions, pleasures and desires, and acknowledges late modern market conditions as, potentially, both oppressive and empowering. Here, "femininity" and "masculinity" are perceived as attributes of performing gender to use and enjoy freely (Heywood & Dworkin 2003: 65). The visibility of the athletic female body is a rare example where "female masculinity" is validated in popular culture (Halberstam 1998: 45). Influential feminists such as Susan Bordo and Angela McRobbie are, however, significantly more critical of aspects of this development. In their view, the celebration of the successful individual/woman and the "post-feminist" call to invest in yourself, with an affirmation of appearance as an individual choice and expression, is part of a neoliberal agenda that is purely anti-feminist (Bordo 1993; McRobbie 2009). This is, no doubt, an academic debate that will continue.

Sport in (Feminist) Cultural Studies

Despite being a prominent form of popular culture and strong economic sector, sport and sport journalism is still relatively neglected as an empirical field of investigation within "mainstream" cultural research. This is rather surprising, especially given cultural studies' history of critiquing elitist understandings of culture as "fine arts" and theorizing the pleasures as well as the emancipatory potential of popular culture. It is still common for sport not to be mentioned at all in overviews, introductions or "readers" in this academic field. The elements of competitiveness and physical contact seem to have downgraded sport, as a sphere of cultural leisure activities as well as a research field. The underlying logic here is a distinction – and hierarchy – between culture and nature, mind and body. Studies of sport culture have, instead, largely been carried out within the fields of sport studies and sociology of sport (Cole 2006: 341; Cardell & Tolvhed 2011). Simon During finds an explanation in the fact that cultural studies have often been carried out by leftist academics with a middle class background, who have preferred to study music and other forms of youth culture that they can relate to on a personal level (During 2005:7).

Peter Dahlén believes sport is neglected within media studies due to its association with body, aggression, unbridled emotion and the working class, and its lack of association to the traditional high culture that historically has been the focus in much media research (Dahlén 2008: 18). Rod Brookes suggests that the marginal position of sport within the academic fields of communication, media

studies and cultural studies is due to the fact that it falls between two intellectual traditions. Sport journalism and sport broadcasting does not measure up to the ideal of democratic media which is the focus of the first tradition, but is instead seen as part of a highly commercialized entertainment industry "driving out serious journalism and increasingly inhibiting what the media should really be doing" (Brookes 2002: 2). The second tradition is one that takes a more postmodern approach to media, and celebrates popular culture not as a distraction but as a means for challenging dominant ideologies. Here, according to Brookes, sport is largely ignored due to the frequent display of conservative attitudes in sports journalism as well as in sports fandom, where stereotypes of gender and race are repeatedly reproduced and reinforced (Brookes 2002: 2-3).

But the tendency to reinforce stereotypes and gender divisions is, of course, in itself a good reason why critical and feminist research should be (more) concerned about sport. And of course some scholars have, indeed, analyzed the gendered dimensions of sport. Works have been done on masculinity in sports culture and journalism (for example, Messner 2003; Rowe 2004). Garry Whannel has studied media representation of sport stars such as Muhammed Ali, David Beckham and Mike Tyson, and argues these sport stars to be central to the cultural production of masculinity in society in general (Whannell 2002). Critical studies on media coverage and representation has shown that female athletes have been and still are marginalized in quantitative term and their sport performances trivialized and regarded as less important compared to their male peers (Birrell and Cole 1994; Birrell and McDonald 2000; Creedon 1994; Fuller 2009; Koivula 1999; Rowe 2004). In *Representing Sport*, Rod Brookes provides an overview of how the media has represented female athletes: *sexualising*, focusing on those perceived as heterosexually attractive and on their bodies, *infantilizing*, for example when grown women are called girls, *trivialising*, neglecting sports performance and results, and finally *familiarizing*, giving attention to the private sphere of family and romance. This kind of representation obscures the hard physical work performed at practice and in competitions. Furthermore, Brookes claims that media attention is decided through stereotypes of what sports or events are perceived as "female-appropriate" and "male-appropriate" respectively: female athletes in male-appropriate sports are neglected, and vice versa (Brookes 2002: 128-130; see also Koivula 1999). My own thesis, on press coverage of summer and winter Olympic Games between 1948 and 1972 in six Swedish popular magazines, explores how historically specific configurations of Swedish masculinity and Swedish femininity are here offered to the reader. Swedish male athletes are represented textually and visually as embodiments of national strength; active and forceful male bodies, competing for national honor, while passivity and attractiveness characterized the representation of Western and Swedish female Olympians (Tolvhed 2008b; 2012b).

Although the gender dimension is the focus of this article, it is notable that the political implications of sport are profound also when it comes to issues of patriotism and ethnicity. Still today, sport seems to offer pockets of nostalgia for a seemingly simpler past, resting not only on gendered fantasies of a time where "men were allowed to be men" but also on nationalist fantasies of a more "unitary" culture of shared values. An example is media and cultural studies scholar Tara Brabazon's study on Australian cricket as a form of separate sphere where a nostalgic fantasy of a patriarchal society centered on the British gentleman colonizer is still upheld and cultivated. These nostalgic narratives are not harmless; in fact they have serious political implications through obstructing new, more including forms of identification better suited to a late modern, multicultural Australia committed to gender equality (Brabazon 2006).

Gender and Sporting Bodies in the "Corporeal Turn"

In spite of the interesting work that has been carried out, I would argue that the potential of sport and physical activity has yet to be fully explored within feminist studies. Sport – including the fitness sphere that has emerged as a prominent commercial market and cultural phenomenon during the last decades – should be analyzed as a site of contestation, with close attention paid to the role this sphere has played and continues to play in women's self-conceptions, subordination and emancipation. Carol A. Osbourne and Fiona Skillen describe a double academic neglect, where women's sport have been marginalized within British sport history, while leisure and sport are seldom the subjects of women's and gender history. The latter fact is unfortunate, they point out, given how *the body* in the field of gender research has been identified as a critical site upon which understandings of women's experiences have been inscribed (Osbourne & Skillen 2010).

Sociologist Kath Woodward identifies similar tendencies within the field of feminist research: sport, leisure and fitness have been trivialized because of its association with play rather than the supposedly more "serious" areas of life such as politics, education and work. Like Osbourne and Skillen above, she finds this rather surprising given the "corporeal turn" in feminism, and suggests that it is due to the mind/body dualism. Sport is degraded through being referred to the physical, as opposed to the intellectual, sphere: "Feminist critiques have been haunted by the ghost of biological reductionism and the unhappy and unrealistic binary of nature and culture" (Woodward 2009: 33). The feminist subject has instead tended, as Joan W. Scott has pointed out, to appear as a disembodied individual. Her intellectual equality with men has been emphasized, while the question of (differing) physical activities and abilities seems to have been difficult to handle and hence often not been taken into account at all (Scott 1996: 154, 173). Similarly, Anne Witz describes how one of the central tasks of feminist sociology has been "to insist that being a woman means more than being in a body; that fe-

male sociality is built out of more than simply fleshy matters." (Witz 2000: 4) The need to move from a previous exclusive focus on female physicality, reproduction and sexuality, towards gender and power in society, resulted in silence on the issue of the body. In order to move forward, Witz calls for a feminist sociology that "think *about* the body *through* gender" (Witz 2000: 7). With the corporeal turn the body made its return, but the challenge to overcome the dichotomies and free the body of its biologist and essentialist connotations still seems pertinent.

As feminist and postcolonial scholars have pointed out, conceptions of the human body have historically been crucial in the social and cultural construction of gender and race (McClintock 1995; Hall 1997; Miller 2004). The (supposed) characteristics of the female body have been used to explain and justify the social exclusion of women and the cultural devaluation of femininity as part of a natural order (Gilman 1985; Grosz 1994: 14). Throughout history, physical activity has formed bodies in a concrete and material sense; sport has made men more "manly", while women's physical activities have been limited and directed towards forms of physical activity deemed conducive to "feminine" suppleness. Sport thus distinctly illustrates the process where culture generates the presumed biological, "natural" embodied gender differences in posture and muscularity that they describe (Shilling 1997: 84-85; Grosz 1994: 10-13). In line with this reasoning, R.W. Connell regards sport as a form of social practice that, like clothes, enhances gender difference and is "part of a continuing effort to sustain a social definition of gender, an effort that is necessary precisely *because the biological logic [...] cannot sustain the gender categories*" (Connell 1987: 81).

Pia Lundkvist Wanneberg's study of Swedish physical education in primary schools during the 20th century gives an example of this very concrete cultivating of boys and girls into two different, highly gender-marked types of citizens. Whereas boys, especially those from the upper classes, were guided towards sport and exercises emphasizing strength, determination and competition, girls were taught to develop grace and agility through "aesthetic" gymnastic exercises (Lundqvist Wanneberg 2004). Also, Jenny Svender (2012) has shown in a recently published study that difference between boys and girls are still today consistently emphasized within the Swedish sports movement, and the teenage girl is framed through normative, heterosexual femininity.

Central to the so called corporeal turn have been a call to explore and understand embodiment, rather than taking it as a given starting point. Embodied practices and patterns of movement through space are not completely internal and specific to the individual, but must be understood as social and cultural, and hence also historical and changeable. At the same time, the materiality of bodies constrains what the social world can impose on them. Bodies pose limits to actions and experiences, and more so in certain contexts than in others:

> Bodies cannot be understood as a neutral medium of social practice. Their materiality matters. They will do certain things and not others. Bodies are substantively in play in social practices such as sport, labour and sex. (Connell 2005: 58)

In two recently published books, *Sex, Power and the Games* (2012) and *Embodied Sporting Practices* (2009), Kath Woodward makes the case for sport as an empirical concern for the field of feminist research. She identifies in sport the potential for better understandings of the processes through which embodied knowledge and subjectivity is produced, in a way that overcomes the split between corporeality and discursive regimes or representations (Woodward 2009: 178). Hence, discourse and representation should be understood as embodied, and embodiment shapes discourse and representation. Studies on this field can contribute to the theorizing of body, gender and difference in ways that combines, rather than chooses between, the two dominant paradigms here; post-structuralism and phenomenology. For Woodward, studies of sport can stimulate a deeper understanding of "enfleshed" bodies as central in the making of individual human identities and experiences. However, feminist fears of being reduced to the anatomical body needs to be addressed here, as well as a social constructionism that disregards the materiality of the body and the reality of embodied human experience.

Inspired by Simone de Beauvoir's reading of the body as a *situation*, Woodward envisions a theorizing of materialized lived experiences in a social, political, cultural context where bodies are *shaped by* but also *produces* knowledge (Woodward 2012). An example can be found in Iris Marion Young's classic essay "Throwing like a girl"; an analysis of how corporeality is implicated in the reproduction of social power relations. Young connects power relations with phenomenology's focus on the lived body and routine practices in the everyday social interactions, and observes how a woman "typically refrains from throwing her whole body into motion and rather concentrates motion in one part of the body alone, while the rest remains rooted in immanence." (Young 2005: 36) This immobility is, according to Young, the result of a culturally specific, learned and embodied fear of getting hurt. She concludes that women often live their bodies as things, which motivates attempts to further understand how sport can be a site of political activism and agency (Woodward 2009: 113).

Sport uniquely demonstrates how bodies are neither a blank surface for social inscriptions, nor simply flesh and blood (Woodward 2009: 16). Embodiment in sport is still a relatively untapped theoretical realm that could provide new understandings of embodied human experience, and post-Foucauldian approaches to the social regulation of bodies (Markula 2004; Markula and Pringle 2006). To what extent can humans be seen as agents that have control over and shape bodies through physical activities? How can we simultaneously embrace (embodied) difference and equality, in a way that also allows (temporal and situational) transformation and change? How is identity and subjectivity shaped and influenced by physical activities, experiences and learning?

Cyborgs, Gender Benders, Monsters?

The centrality of gender verification and enfleshed bodies in sport makes it a fruitful area for the exploration of connections between sex and gender. As the recent case of runner Caster Semenya demonstrates, athletic superiority and "masculine" attributes in women still today stir public emotions and evoke cultural anxieties of gender blurring. At the 2009 World Championships in Athletics, The International Association of Athletics Federations demanded that Semenya underwent both drug and ''gender tests'' to investigate her dramatic improvement in speed as well as suspicions based on her muscular, "masculine" appearance. This was done in the name of justice, with references to an unfair situation if women should have to compete against men (Vannini & Fornssler 2011).

The debate made visible different positions on how gender should be defined, medically or by identification. Sloop finds, interestingly, a hybrid category of gender in the debate on Semenya; a logic according to which Semenya could be described by commentators as "not fully a woman, but not fully a man" or "not 100% woman". This simultaneously maintains and destabilizes gender: "While ignoring a great number of aspects of bodies, the logic does create (or maintain) a meaningful reality for most 'bodies', providing most of us with 'bodies that matter', at the expense of those with bodies that confuse." (Butler 1993; Sloop 2012: 88) As her body was understood as existing outside the binary categories available, a threatening abject, unruly, hybrid or monstrous, many discussants in public debate stated the opinion that Semenya should be removed from sports, or at least "treated" so that her "sex-gender problem" was fixed or managed to maintain a stable gender identity (Sloop 2012).

From the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City onwards, the IOC has made female athletes prove their "true" femininity through various diagnostic technologies which C.L. Cole describes as: "ranging from external visual, probing gynecological to chromosomal-buccal smear and gene amplification" (Cole 2006: 344). With these tests, the IOC sanctioned a message that if women are really good athletes, they might be men. Furthermore, the logic of these tests are, as Woodward describes it, "that not only is there an absolute truth but also science is the route to establishing what that truth is" (Woodward 2012: 58). Through being athletes and being subjected to these tests, women have found out that they have Y chromosomal material, something they might never have known otherwise. Apart from any personal consequences that this might have, they get publicly exposed as "not real women" and cast as cheaters (Woodward 2012: 54-56). Sex is reproduced and reinforced as a regime of truth with normative dimensions; that sex should also determine gender identity. Biology takes precedence over culture (Woodward 2012: 185-186).

At the same time, however, the history of gender testing has publicly demonstrated the evasive character of gender. Gender transgressions pose a cultural di-

lemma, since they expose categories as unstable and fluent rather than – as frequently assumed – consistent and clearly delineated. The chromosome test was eventually eliminated because of the realization that the body's sex is much more complex and that a test examining the genetic makeup is not a conclusive method to determine sex; hence demonstrating how the body is, in fact, not an either/or phenomena (Fausto Sterling 2000: 3). Instead, as C. L. Cole notes, gender verification tests in sport have exposed the gender dichotomy and uncovered a continuum of bodies that cannot easily be arranged into two stable, separate gender categories:

> a wide range of boundary creatures appear within sex testing narratives: drug-crafted athletes, steroid men/women, intersexed, transsexed, hypermuscular females, hypernormal females, innocent victims, communist athletes, embryos and maternal bodies. (Cole 2006: 344-345)

Recent technological innovations further emphasize how sport is a site for physical transformations and challenges to the boundaries of the human body. These innovations also pose a delicate dilemma; on the one hand immense opportunities to follow sport's inherent competitive logic, creating even faster records and increasing the stamina and strength of athletes, which however, on the other hand, clashes with traditional notions of fair play and also evokes deep set cultural fears of monstrosity (Woodward 2009: 160). Here, feminist technoscience perspectives – Braidotti's (1994) monsters or Haraway's (1991) cyborgs – can be applied to advances in the field of sport, where phenomena such as performance-enhancing drugs or high-tech prosthetics, as in the case of South African runner Oscar Pistorius, pushes the boundaries between nature and culture, human and cyborg, flesh and technology (Jönsson 2007; Woodward 2009: 152-160). A study that tends to the complex interaction between technology, body and identity is Swedish sociologist Elisabet Apelmo's on young women with physical impairments. Apelmo analyses how they through sport activities – playing sledge hockey, wheelchair basketball or table tennis – make use of technology in their identity construction. The analysis draws on the metaphor of the cyborg as a hybrid figure that challenges bodily normalcy and organic unity. The wheelchair becomes part of their self-presentation as well as subjectivity as young women and as athletes (Apelmo 2012).

Without doubt, fundamental changes have taken place on issues of women's sport. Today, women practice sport and partake in competitions on all levels. Female athletes become media stars, even cultural icons. Male to female transsexuals are allowed to compete as women (in the Olympics, from two years after the operation). But aggressiveness and toned, salient muscles – the visible result of hard physical work – can still stir public emotions and deep set cultural anxieties of gender blurring. Through exposing how muscles can be gained and developed, rather than just "naturally" belonging to male bodies, the muscular bodies of female athletes or bodybuilders push and transgress the limits of the bipolar system

of gender differentiation through appropriating "masculine" characteristics. Hence, they pose a symbolic challenge to the supposedly natural differences that legitimizes hierarchy and male superiority (Schulze 1990: 59; Tasker 1993: 141-146; Heywood 1998; Diprose 2002: 64-65).

In this article, I have argued that the body can, and should, be considered as an integrated part of the feminist project, a base or position for symbolic and structural challenges as well as for the strengthening and liberation of the individual. The general area of sport and fitness, today commercialized as a battery of services, clothes and other equipment as well as a glossy magazine market, is influential in an economic as well as social and cultural sense, and certainly too important to be outside of the scope of feminist research. Studies of sport and physical activities can contribute to the understanding of embodiment and the theorizing of gender. It seems, as M Ann Hall has noted, particularly well-suited for the "third wave" feminist cultural studies that is at ease with complexities and contradictions; the practices and (commercialized) images of the sportswoman can, certainly, be analyzed as being potentially oppressive as well as potentially empowering (Hall 2005: 56).

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Perfume Packaging, Seduction and Gender

By Magdalena Petersson McIntyre

Abstract

This article examines gender and cultural sense-making in relation to perfumes and their packaging. Gendered meanings of seduction, choice, consumption and taste are brought to the fore with the use of go-along interviews with consumers in perfume stores. Meeting luxury packages in this feminized environment made the interviewed women speak of bottles as objects to fall in love with and they described packages as the active part in an act of seduction where they were expecting packages to persuade them into consumption. The interviewed men on the other hand portrayed themselves as active choice-makers and stressed that they were always in control and not seduced by packaging. However, while their ways of explaining their relationship with packaging on the surface seems to confirm cultural generalizations in relation to gender and seduction, the article argues that letting oneself be seduced is no less active than seducing. Based on a combination of actor network theories and theories of gender performativity the article points to the agency of packaging for constructions of gender and understands the interviewees as equally animated by the flows of passion which guide their actions.

Introduction

> We have created a collection that will disrupt gender roles and give the carrier an opportunity to explore new sides of themselves… For a generation who demands the freedom to choose… Multiple personalities have never looked so sexy!
>
> Dolce and Gabbana

Gender is made everywhere, even with the small and inconspicuous everyday goods such as the packages with which we carry consumables home from the store. Packages are often perceived as an unnecessary source of waste, but based on Cochoy (2004, 2007) this article builds on a view of packages as an extension of the contents which has agency. Packages make aspects of the contents visible to us that we cannot perceive by looking, touching, tasting or smelling the product itself, such as nutrients and calories. Perfume packaging, the subject on which the article deliberates, tells us about scent notes, alcohol content and preservatives. With words and pictures which convey luxury and desire they also produce glamorous and sensual meanings. Placed on a store shelf, accompanied with images of attractive men and women and suggestive lighting, bottles and cartons create a luxurious atmosphere which says that it is important to spend money on beautifying oneself and that the consumption of luxury will make you into a desirable and attractive person. Promising love and glamour, packages try to attract our attention in a split second, to convince us that it is this particular fragrance which best represents the person we want to be, and not the competitor's perhaps equal product.

Packaging helps us to choose. By guiding and preceding our choices, packages assist us, and we are given a variety of references that makes us select in the "right" way (Cochoy 2004, 2007). For Cochoy, building on actor network theory, pointing to the actions packages perform works as a way to illustrate the active role that objects have and to emphasize that agency is not only a human trait. Packages do however not only ask us to choose between different products in terms of contents. With the use of visual and textual language perfume packaging invites us to become that stylish Parisian, or that preppy, natural beauty, or that generator of raw sexuality who meet us in advertisements. But there is more than that. By telling us whether the contents are "for her", "for him", perhaps unisex or with no gender at all packages "do" gender and by that not only give scripts for practices of consumption, but, as I will show, take active part in the performativity of gender.

As pointed out by Hine (1997) packaging speaks to the intellect but even more so to the emotions. Package design has, ever since the 1930s, been understood in two distinct ways. On one hand it has been the subject of psychological market research where shopping has been conceptualized as an irrational process and packages as effective mainly as long as they speak to the subconscious. On the other hand, there has been a counter-movement that has called for packaging to enlighten consumers regarding the usefulness and effectiveness of the products

and information about, for example, possible allergic reactions (Hine 1997). The design of perfume packaging is mainly about the former process, to seduce consumers by subconsciously playing on moods and thereby convince them to buy. Content declarations are however mandatory and can even reinforce a gender coded message by listing ingredients like musk or rose. Thus, the two movements are not in clear opposition to each other. Furthermore, both movements are gendered in particular ways. Psychological market research has taken a gender relation between a female consumer (seduced) and a male marketer/shop owner (seducer) for granted. The consumer movements which have resulted in legislation and policies for package design have at large consisted of women activists.

Making Sense of Packages

Analyses of the meaning-making of perfumes have mostly been based on visual or textual interpretations of advertisements (cf. Schoeder 2002; Kjellmer 2009; Hemme 2010; Freeman 2011) or of the role of perfume in literature (Solander 2010). Based on ethnographic interviews in shops, this article studies how consumers interpret and understand the gendered meanings of perfumes and their packaging, particularly with regard to seduction. Thus, the article argues that design objects do not have any definite meanings in themselves, but must be related to the power relations, methods and processes through which they are made sense (Partington 1996). Marketing language is performative; it shapes the way we think about ourselves by presenting, expecting and normalizing choices that we may not have thought of or known, such as choices between the claimed characteristics of the goods as well as what they are supposed to "say" about or do for the user (cf. Cronin 2000). Consumption practices are nevertheless far from direct echoes of what appears in advertisements, movies, in shops and in media. Meaning is not created either by consumers, marketers or packages but should be viewed as a network that emerges in negotiations between these different actors (Cochoy 2004).

Gender Performativity

In the theories of gender performativity by Judith Butler (1990, 1993), gender is seen not as an expression of an inner identity, expressive, but as performative; an effect of gender performance. "Woman" cannot, according to Butler, be understood outside the way it is staged or performed. Gender is not an attribute or essential property of subjects but "a kind of becoming or activity… an incessant and repeated action of some sort (Butler 1990: 112). Gender identity is not the result of physical differences, but of the complex discursive practices in which gender, sexuality and desire is co-produced. Building on speech act theory, Butler sees gender as performative citational practices. These practices reproduce discourse,

but can also work subversively. Gender both enables and disciplines subjects and their performances.

With this, gender is understood as a process, a doing, and through that process we are created and recreated. These doings are repeated over time and become conventions. There are conventions for gestures, movements and styles that make us into men and women, from the clothes we wear, the way we move, the goods we consume or the way we talk about ourselves as he or she. Through these repetitions, we become the men and women that we have learned to orchestrate. These styles do not express a stable identity, they are not cultural expression of identities determined by the body; they are formed by the stylization of the body itself (Butler 1990; Loxley 2007).

It is however not only humans that perform gender and it is not only the human body that is performative. Objects do it too. Re-connecting to the initially presented theories of material agency in actor network theory, consumer goods and their packaging are from this perspective not to be regarded as passive, but as performative. Whereas gender is generally under theorized in actor network theory, I have found it fruitful to combine these ideas with the butlerian theories of gender performativity (see also Barad 2007).

Design conventions for imagery, shapes, cuts, colours, fonts, texts and words make some scents masculine (spicy and musky), others feminine (sweet flowery) and others still unisex (fresh citrusy). Packaging enhances such cultural perceptions of smell, it also constructs them, by combining imagery, text and ingredients, and it can break with them in order to stand out on the market. The ways we understand these designs are also part of the performativity of gender, the interpretations, or cultural meaning-making, of objects in gender terms. The marketing of perfumes and the design of packaging relies on specific conventions for gender by which we are performatively addressed as men and women.

Gender Diversity and Luxury

During the last century the perfume industry has mainly targeted women. Perfume has become a feminized good and the industry has built its meaning-making around seduction and irrational and uncontrollable desires (cf. Kjellmer 2009). In the last decades the market for men's beauty and perfume has however grown immensely. Because of the gendered associations of femininity and seduction the perfume industry has struggled to find ways of marketing fragrance to men. Many attempts to package masculine consumption have been made, some of which have focused on the eroticization of the male body. It has been a trick of the trade to try to package scents "for him" in ways which commodify masculinity without feminizing the user (cf. Breazeale 2000; Scanlon 2000). Men are often depicted in cleansing rituals, in the shower or getting ready to go out and seduce partners. As pointed out by Classen, Synnott and Howes (1994) perfume adverts often show

how fragrance will increase the masculinity of the carrier and make him irresistible to women, as in for example television commercials for Axe deodorant. Men's consumption is associated with rationality and needs; and perfume will make men into more powerful seducers.

Women's perfume marketing on the other hand often shows a sexual relationship between goods and consumers, or the bottle and a woman. During the 1980s women's fragrances began to be advertised with images of women holding and embracing an enlarged bottle (Classen, Synnott & Howes 1994). Today, women are often depicted in bed with a bottle filling in for an absent lover, such as in *Flash* by Jimmy Choo. The relationship between women and their fragrances is represented as one of passion. Names such as *Desire me* by Escada, *Dance with* Givenchy and *J'Adore* by Dior allude to this relationship. Perfume packaging is hence particularly suitable for discussing aspects of seduction and the ways in which seduction builds on specific gendered ideas of activity and passivity.

For Him or for Her

In the mainstream, mass-market for perfume, there are two distinct genders, "for her" and "for him" (or pour homme and pour femme). Most shops have distinct sections, where they keep the products aimed for men and women respectively separate and mark "for him" as a separate department or "shop-in-shop". Nonetheless, women and femininity are represented in many and often contradictory ways. Sexy, romantic, elegant, mysterious, sporty, girly, cosmopolitan, masculine, oriental, these are only some of the many ways of portraying feminine beauty. Men and masculinity also appear in many different versions, even if the variation is far greater for women. When it comes to packaging, a dark bottle performs masculinity, but there are also black, square bottles with fragrances "for her". Round bottles mostly perform femininity, but not always. Elves, pink and glitter package women's scents, but fragrances "for her" can also be sporty and subtly simplistic, such as the bottle for Chanel *No 5* which was originally inspired by a medicine bottle. Words and names which allude to pleasure and temptation mostly appear on women's fragrances, but then again they sometimes show on fragrances aimed at men, and become part of performing masculinity. Most stores are strictly divided into gender, but it is not so everywhere. At observations in duty free and perfume shops, I noticed several stores where it was difficult to see whether the fragrances were aimed to men or women or to all.

Unisex both transgresses and reassures this (if at times blurry) two-sex-model. Although unisex is sometimes presented as a product which is beyond gender, it is simultaneously described as something for both *men* and *women*, thereby working with those categories rather than disrupting them. Even though unisex is not so common, there are some best sellers and unisex has the advantage of being placed in double locations in stores. Sometimes unisex is brought forth as a sales argument in itself for customers who define themselves in terms of lifestyle rather than

in terms of gender, as in CK *One* (cf. Schroeder 2002) and sometimes understated as in so called craft perfumes, such as Byredo or Acqua di Parma, where the absence of gender segmentation helps giving value to the brand or scent by emphasizing the craft of perfumery rather than the image-making. Often, then, the word "unisex" is avoided.

Brands consciously invest images and goods with ambiguous meanings (Schroeder and Borgerson 2003). Imagery taken from gay visual culture is a common feature in perfume advertising, where brands such as Dolce and Gabbana and Jean-Paul Gaultier have associated their products with gay iconography, art and culture, sometimes bordering on the pornographic (Church Gibson 2004). Other brands work on ambiguity, such as Thierry Mugler, who with their scent *Angel* made a fragrance for women without floral ingredients; which usually indicates a masculine scent, and packaged it in a star-shaped blue bottle; which associates to sailors. The meaning making of perfume builds on a double logic in this sense of both asserting "for her" and "for him" and simultaneously refusing these categories by constantly challenging them and building desire around ambiguity (Partington 1996). This "obsession" with gender, sexuality and desire which the perfume world presents also needs to be related to its particular market. First, since perfume has no function in itself its meanings are, as mentioned, built around image-making. This image-making is largely structured around gender, sexuality and desire. Second, perfume is a luxury commodity. Luxury gains its value though excess and of having "the most", "the best" and "the most beautiful" of a particular good or service (Lipovetsky 1994; Twitchell 2002). In the case of perfume the overflow of gender and sexualities signifies not only ambiguity, but also luxury. Important to keep in mind is also that though feminine design features are sometimes applied on men's scents it is far more common that designs and scent notes which associate to masculinity are applied on women's scents. Thus, there is also the logic of giving femininity a higher value by associating its visual expressions with masculinity at stake in these processes.

Still, the world of perfume signals, perhaps more than anything else, diversity, ambiguity and uncertainty with regard to gender and sexuality. Feminine, as well as masculine identities are presented as something that we consumers can select and deselect. As the initial quote which presents the line of fragrances *Anthology* by Dolce and Gabbana says, contemporary consumers are constructed as competent choice makers who pick identities based on their mood of the day. Consequently, perfume packages do not so much say that femininity is represented in one particular way, as with pink flowers, as it says that femininity is represented in many different ways and that the ways in which individuals choose to perform their gender identity varies. Not only is there the, within marketing, well-used strategy to approach customers as "types", such as "the romantic", "the classy woman", "the seductress", "the sporty woman" and "the sexy, mysterious woman" or even the "unisex woman" or the "masculine woman", consumers are in-

creasingly asked to cultivate such personality types within themselves and refine them differently on different occasions. "Types" are now presented as personality traits which reside in each one of us and which can be brought out on occasion with the use of a particular fragrance. And these types sometimes transgress gender segments to further enhance the call to choice.

Partington (1996) analyses the many different representations of women and men that perfume packaging and advertising present as an expression of the inherent instability of gender constructions. Drawing on Judith Butler's theories on gender (1990), Partington sees the diversity of gender in perfume packaging as an illustration of gender as plural, as something that cannot be fixed. The lack of coherency in representations is an expression of a lack of coherency in cultural genders and a sign that gender is performative, she argues. Though my article draws on Partington and is indebted to her analysis, I find it not only positions itself too close to the marketing messages where masculine and feminine are colours on a palette, open for anyone to pick and choose from, it by this misses out on the normative dimensions of gender representation in perfume packaging. Partington also misses the performativity of choice. The variety of representations of men and women in the perfume world represents a vision of identity as something optional; of the consumer as an individual who chooses goods to express his or her identity. This vision is itself performative. Rather than emphasizing the diversity of gender in the world of perfume I want to stress the inherent contradiction that this diversity builds on. On one hand masculinity and femininity (or unisex) are presented as options for individuals to engage in free-willingly, unattached to by structural constraints. On the other, these options are presented with gender-coded messages, on different shelves, with different sign-posts, shop spaces and with different meanings. In short, men and women are offered to choose the same, but in different locations… well, at least sometimes.

Regarding the ambiguity and diversity of gender representation I have found it fruitful to, instead of interpreting the plurality of gender representations in perfume packaging as an indication of the plurality of cultural genders, to interpret plurality as an example of "slippage" which is a key concept in Butler's theories. Each repetition of gender offers an opportunity for transformation of meaning. Repetitive performances are not just an exact copy. There is slippage which has to be taken seriously. Each time that gender is performed, it is enacted for the very first time. Each time gender is performed on a package there is slippage of meaning which gives space for change. Perfume packaging both uses and distances itself from a simple two-sex-model. As my article will show gaps also exist between the ways packages perform gender and consumers' interpretations of the same. Therefore, the perfume world's commitment to gender and sexuality must not only be understood as merely repeating conventions on gender, but that it also actively changes them. In constantly creating new representations of gender, the meanings of what gender is and how it is presented transform.

Shop Along in the Perfume Store

Thus, the mass market of perfume on one hand displays two clear genders, and on the other presents identities as unstable and under constant transformation. These meanings do however not say anything about how consumers understand perfume packaging in relation to gender. Whether a package says "for him", "for her", "unisex" or nothing at all does not automatically mean that consumers interpret them in that way or imply that consumption of perfume follows a simple hetero-sexual logic. Consumers may use perfumes in order to define, perform or play with sexual identities. Further, messages of genderlessness or ambiguity may not be understood in those ways or be consistent with acts of consumption. Cultural meaning-making does not work as a message from a sender (package) to a receiv-er (consumer). As mentioned, with reference to Butler, parts of the performativity of gender are processes of language mediated interpretation. This article hence aims at discussing the performativity of packaging with the use of go-along inter-views. The purpose is to examine what meanings the representations of gender on packages have for the ways that gender is interpreted by some men and women in Sweden. What do they think that the packages say, and what does it mean to them? What effects do constructions of gender that we meet in the perfume world have?

Methodologically, the article builds on ethnographic go-along (Kusenbach 2003, see also Miller 1998; Bücher & Urry 2009; Arvastsson & Ehn 2009). The fieldwork was part of a larger study where 13 men and women were interviewed about packaging. I asked them to meet me at a place of their choice and ten of them chose a supermarket in a central location. With these ten informants I first walked around the supermarket with a voice recorder in my hand and discussed packaging, and afterwards walked to a perfume or beauty store to continue dis-cussing packaging and after that sat down at a café to discuss further what we had seen. This article builds on the interviews from the perfume stores and the super-market interviews have at large been left out of it, even though they are at times used as a point of reference in the observations and the analysis.

The informants were all between 18 and 65 years old and most of them with jobs that required some form of academic education. One was still a student; one was "between jobs", another was part time homemaker, part time working in her own business and one had a job within industrial production; another had a secre-tarial occupation. On the whole there was a slight overrepresentation of people with long academic education but with low incomes. The interviews were record-ed and transcribed in detail.

Walking with informants is a way of not just observing what they do, but to experience an environment and see things together sometimes for the first time (Bäckman 2009). Thus, we analyzed the meanings of packaging together and per-formed a visual analysis there and then. I was, as the researcher, not the only one

who analyzed. Visiting the shop environments for the purpose of discussing pack-aging made it necessary to think about packages in more general ways; reflect upon the packages that were there, how they were placed, made to look appealing and intended to attract consumers. During the sit down interview afterwards, the discussions were often even more general and included packages that we did not see there and then.

Some of the informants guided me through the shops and showed me packages that they found interesting, while during some interviews I took more of the role as guide, asked them what they would normally buy and then to comment on what we saw. Some did their regular purchases in the shops that we went to; others chose the particular sites because of their location. While the supermarket was a familiar place to them all, the beauty store was only for some. Many of the men, especially, seemed "lost" in the perfume store and did not have so much to say, while some of the women (though not all) really enjoyed going around the store, looking at and touching the products and planning future purchases. The fact that I was a woman doing the interviewing also meant that some of the women could talk to me like a friend on a shopping trip while the men were in general more hesitant and unsure of what to say. At least two thirds and in some cases probably up to 90 percent of the goods on display in beauty stores have a woman as intend-ed buyer. All the sales assistants are, with very few exceptions, women. So are the other customers. The design of the stores is worked out with a woman as intended user. Products for men often, though not always, stand out in difference. Given this, entering a store in the company of a male or female interviewee is not the same thing. It is an environment with a particular gender coding which affects the interactions. Depending upon the feminization of the field of beauty and perfume, the interviewed women were in general also more knowledgeable and experienced of this field than the men were. To beautify one's body is in many respects to make it feminine which implies that the workings of this market were in no way unfamiliar to the women, contrary they knew it all too well.

None of the participants were explicitly interested in packaging. Neither had they given any particular amount of thought to packaging in advance. I presented my study by explaining that I wanted to gain insights on cultural meanings of packages and how these matter in everyday life. I also said that I wanted to hear and learn about their own experiences and thoughts on the subject. The informants were often, not surprisingly, more interested in the contents than the packages and I sometimes (quite forcefully) pushed the discussions towards packages.

During the interviews, I asked the interviewees to describe what, in their opin-ions, characterizes feminine, masculine and unisex packaging respectively. I was not so interested in hearing "truths" about packaging and marketing, but rather how this made sense to them, in order to analyze the cultural interpretations and meanings of packaging. An interview situation is performative in this sense; we analyzed, but also "made" gender through the way we presented ourselves to each

other as well as to how we related ourselves to the gender segments of masculine and feminine packaging that we met in the stores. By talking about packages in terms of gender we also performed gender. The packages, along with the shop environment that they were placed in worked, as a form of trigger for gendered meaning-making. The packages and the atmosphere moved the informants (and me); had agency for how they (we) made sense of the situation.

Gender and the Art of Seduction – Mikael and Katarina

When I and Mikael, a man in his early forties, enter the perfume store he crunches his nose and says that he cannot understand how anyone can stand that smell. "They try to drug you", he says, "to make you buy". Mikael's metaphor is telling. To drug someone is to remove their active choice, take away their rationally informed decision and affect the chain of events with the use of chemical substances. In the context of consumption it relates to seduction.

The beauty chain store which we go to has the section for fragrances "for him" directly as you get into the shop; a display technique aimed at promoting and normalizing this growing market segment. Fragrances "for her" are the last stop along the aisle and in between there are a range of different cosmetic and skincare products. Mikael continues a discussion that we have had in the supermarket earlier about gendered products. He finds it ridiculous how anyone really can fall for these simple marketing techniques, think that men and women need different shower creams and that some men would not buy a white package, such as *Dove's*, only grey ones which say "for him". Packages have no significance for Mikael at all and he could not care less whether there is a picture of a man or a woman on the cover. Mikael exemplifies with different gender stereotypes that he has seen through; such as the mother doing laundry; the active boy and the passive girl; or the associations with men and technology, all common stereotypes on packaging.

Mikael does not particularly like perfume himself, not since he got into his mid-twenties, but still likes a particular fragrance from Yves Saint Laurent and explains that "it has been around forever". As we walk around in the store he points to other bottles that he says his dad used to buy. Even though Mikael does not care about packages he does have clear taste preferences. He likes square bottles, classic design, and not "jokey" ones and not gold. He is particularly hesitant to the more expressive and youthful bottles, such as *1 Million* by Paco Rabanne, *Le Male* by Jean-Paul Gaultier or *Fuel for Life* by Diesel.

When it comes to fragrances Mikael seems less inclined to dismissing gendered marketing messages and does not remark particularly on gender stereotypes. Buying fragrances "for her" for himself does not seem to have occurred to him. Mikael is not very interested in perfumes, hardly ever buys it, and choosing from the women's side would probably either require an experienced consumer with a

strong interest in the scents themselves and/ or one with the deliberate intent to cross over gender segments. Shower cream and washing powder are after all products that he buys on a regular basis. Also the perfume market has worked its meanings to build on mystery, magic and chemistry where the composition of fragrance magically awakens sexual desire in others. Such imagery is perhaps more difficult to see through for someone who is not an experienced perfume consumer.

Entering a department store beauty courtyard and adjacent fragrance room with Katarina, a woman in her mid-forties, is a very different story. Katarina instantly bursts out "oh I love this. Make-up is so much fun even though I know that it doesn't show on me". She is enthused by all the packages and products and, like Mikael, shows me things that she used to have when she was younger. These days I mostly by Lancôme, she says. She doesn't know why but has to stick to one brand. Katarina gets "obsessive" with lipstick, she says. She has bought lots of them over the years; either the ones she likes go out of stock or she happens to buy the wrong nuance. "Oh look", she says, "I have bought lots of these lipsticks because they look like ice-creams. Fruity, gorgeous colours. I could buy one right now". "I really go on how they look", she continues. "I think that is really important. I want it to feel luxurious. Oh look at these, they look gorgeous together". Suddenly she turns:

> Katarina: It also makes me feel awful.
>
> Magdalena: Why is that?
>
> Katarina: Because it is so expensive.
>
> Magdalena: You give in to a desire and regret it afterwards?
>
> Katarina: Earlier I was really bad at… When my son was younger I never bought things for myself. Everything I bought I converted into what I could have bought for him. I could have bought so and so many sweaters. I did that with everything. But now I can spend on myself again.

Katarina feels ambivalent to shopping, she tells me. She thinks that she is "smarter than this" and should not be satisfied by giving in to such temptations. She should know better than to think that consumption makes you happy:

> Katarina: I think it has to do with the way you were brought up too. My mum, she never did this. If she knew that I spend money on this she would really think that I am a complete idiot. She would. You really should see through the myth that consumption makes you happy… but sometimes I say that 'sure you can buy happiness'. Sometimes you can. I do feel happy when I bring something home… When we are finished I think I have to go on a shopping spree.

Packages thus awoke memories in both Katarina and Mikael. Katarina could hear the voice of her mum telling her not to waste/be shallow. Mikael got a glimpse of memory: dad had this. While Mikael's dad became a reference to men's consumption as something which is stable over time, as not-fashion, Katarina's mum had a message of restraint and moderation.

Mikael explained packages as unimportant, as objects whose appeal he did not want to listen too, and most certainly was not seduced by. He wanted to make active choices. He did not like being drugged. He could see through gender stereotypes. To be able to see through gender stereotypes, for Mikael, worked as a way to enact rationality. Stereotype images were, for him, not rational. He saw stereotype images as a translation of the manipulative forces of commerce, which the contents do not correspond with.

Katarina who initially related beauty products to herself and to the improvement of her own body, contrary explained packages as objects which she wanted to guide her. She wanted the products "to sell", to convince her to buy them with the use of techniques of seduction. She described her consumption as out of control. She said that she buys obsessively without knowing why and ends up with the wrong goods which in turn make her buy more. In Katarina's telling, agency was with the packages, products, ad campaigns and desires or passions. She however also thought that temptation should not be given into too easily.

Shopping for Passion: Peter and Anne

Peter, a man in his late forties and Anne, a woman in her early twenties were of the interviewees the two who were the most regular perfume consumers. If Peter enacted a form of masculinity informed by the cultural (and male) figure "the connoisseur" and used facts and knowledge to make sense of his perfume consumption (cf. Belk 1995), Anne went into dialogue with products, brands and campaigns and related them to herself as a person.

Peter had an interest in fashion in general, was careful with what he bought and said that he was "hung up" on scents. He did not care for the perfume chain store that we browsed through and did his shopping in more exclusive stores or on the internet. When I ask about packages and bottles Peter, much like Mikael, says at first that they have no meaning. "It is 100% the contents that count". Bottles have to be functional, he says and that he treasures simplicity and discretion. The glass should be see through and have no visible brand names. Simplicity sends a signal that the contents are "potent", he says. "It makes me curious". Potency refers to the fragrance's ability to perform, to be functional. Simplicity triggers curiosity in Peter, the bottle works, in a way, as a market device which sets a disposition, curiosity, into movement, a disposition which can work as a trigger to buy (Cochoy 2012). Peter's remarks show how conventions which convey masculinity are designed to work to persuade customers to shop. Curiosity is also made sense of in relation to gender. Just the same, it is the bottle that is given agency. The bottle makes Peter act in particular ways. Peter however describes himself as a subject in control who uncovers the secrets of the fragrances; he is not at all seduced. He shows me a bottle that he likes and explains that it was introduced in 1965. Just

like Mikael then Peter brings up "tradition" as meaningful in relation to masculine packaging. The fragrance, *Eau Sauvage* by Dior is manly he says:

> Magdalena: Why is it manly? Facetted glass, that is not really that common on men's scents, is it?
>
> Peter: It is a scent that lasts [over time]. It doesn't need to be told as part of any life-style, if you wear it you will speak for yourself. You don't need to [tell any other story in the marketing]. It signals quality consciousness.
>
> Magdalena: It becomes invisible?
>
> Peter: Well it… it is subtle. It doesn't stink, that's cheap. You sense it… vaguely.

For Peter, who finds packaging unimportant, it is the scent rather than the package that is manly and he actually tries to define a masculine character in the smell and interestingly enough he does not form his characterization in relation to scent notes. Peter's emphasis of the function of the scent and the meaninglessness of packaging can be seen as an enactment of masculinity. The lack of lifestyle advertising, confidence in quality as well as subtlety conveys manliness for Peter and he stresses that you never see ads for this scent; it does not need to be advertised. Like the other interviewed men, Peter does not like being told "who he is" and he explicitly connects the absence of (lifestyle) advertising to manliness. Whatever the packages whisper, Peter does not want to say that he can hear it.

We continue along the "for her" section and Peter is not impressed. The hazy pastel shimmer makes the products drown, he thinks. Everything looks the same and if he was to buy his wife a present he would not know how to choose. The greys and blacks "for him" he finds are more eye-catching which he thinks may have to do with him "being a man".

Like Peter, though reversed, Anne says that men's scents look boring. She is hesitant to men consuming too much beauty care and she tells me that she sees skin care products for men as something strange. "When a guy stands before the mirror and puts on more cream than the girl, that feels weird", she says. While "guys" should consume less beauty products than "girls" to remain masculine, they should according to Anne not go as far as to consume nothing at all. Too much product consumption risks overthrowing gender relations, but the right amount helps bringing out a masculine identity, she finds:

> Anne: A guy who doesn't… who washes himself with [unbranded] and scentless soap and does not use any male deodorant or perfume… a lot of his identify, or attitude disappears I think. It is much easier to be attracted to someone who smells good, even if his looks maybe are not right [that is, is not physically attractive]. It really does a lot. I really think it is important that guys wear it too.

As I and Anne continue along the counters of Clarins and Clinique she explains that she does not like products with red packaging. Red is for older women, she feels, and she is not "drawn to" it. Since she is young, she does not feel that these packages speak to her, pull her to them. Like Katarina, Anne explains that she really goes on packaging and she calls herself a visual person. She explains how

J'Adore by Dior became her favorite perfume. The images and ads looked so great and the model in the pictures is beautiful, she says. When she first saw the ad she decided to love the fragrance, and it is still her favorite. Sometimes fragrances do not smell the way they look and you get disappointed but this was not the case with *J'Adore*. Anne has also made the seasonal launches of Escada's summer fragrances into a tradition. She waits for the launch of the next season and buys it regardless of smell. She knows that it always will be good, but it is exciting to wait for it.

Peter linked visual perception to gender. His choice of words was more distanced and did not involve him as a person. Like Mikael he did not put his interest in scents in terms of being seduced, even though there was no difference per se to Anne's more passionate descriptions of perfume consumption. Whereas Peter presented himself as liking to make informed decisions about perfume consumption, Anne presented her consumption as initiated by the seductive forces of commerce. Peter enacted rationality by saying that packages make no difference. Anne enacted the role of seduced by stressing package more than contents. When Anne spoke of potential male partners what she said was very similar to what she said about bottles and packages. It was someone/something to be seduced "by", not someone to seduce.

The Choice of Simplicity

But what is it like for consumers who do not care so much for fragrances? Who are not under the influence of a passionate interest? What do they pick up on of all the things that the bottles try to say and what guides their actions?

Fredrik, a man in his mid-twenties, and Patrik, a man in his mid-thirties, are both hesitant and unsure about what to think and say about fragrances and their packaging. Fredrik is however quite experienced of skincare products since he, he tells me, has suffered from acne. He talks about the importance of trying many different products to find what suits you. When it comes to fragrance he is "boring" he says. He does not use much, though he likes to have something nice for when he is going out in the evening. His attitude towards the consumption of scent can be described with "I probably should…" that is he feels that he should consume more, but is not really interested. Scenting the body with branded fragrance is given meaning by him in relation to "going out"; part of preparing the body in order to participate in social acts of entertainment or of the seduction of potential partners. He does not buy without "needing" a new one and does not like to spend money on unnecessary packaging. Like for Peter and Mikael it is "the scent that matters". Compared to Anne above, he does not speak of being seduced by women and women with women's fragrances on, or by fragrances worn by women (or on the shelf) for that matter; he speaks of scents as means of his seduction.

Patrik has a similar approach. Knowing what we are in the store to discuss, he points to a bottle that he says "feels masculine".

Patrik: Rectangular, square-shaped. Nearly twice as tall as wide. It feels masculine.

Magdalena: What makes it feel masculine?

Patrik: The square shape. The blue colour. The silver details that are nice and stylish.

Patrik likes what he calls "simplicity" in package design, something he has in common with all the interviewed men. Some of the women also bring it up. Nina, a woman in her late 40s, likes simplicity too and has on our previous walk through a supermarket described herself as a critical consumer who thinks a lot about what she buys, who is a vegetarian and tries to only buy ecological products, but also that she is "lazy" and wants shopping and cooking to be easy. For her, simplicity signifies moderation.

Although simplicity seems to be a cherished characteristic by both men and women the meaning is a somewhat different. They all tend to treasure simplicity in relation to the market segment they identify with. "Simplicity" in the sense lack of décor is a common way of packaging masculinity. Though "simplicity" is also featured on women's scents it is one of the least visible designs. For Nina, then, simplicity creates a distance to most of the packages which try to lure her, she finds, to buy them, while for Patrik, simplicity puts him on the same level as the most prominent taste ideal for men's packages.

When we enter the perfume store I ask Nina to comment on characteristics of packages "for him" and "for her". She points to colours and shapes but does not seem to find the topic particularly interesting. She is critical to branding, she says and ironizes over lifestyle marketing, so it is not only the men who bring this up. She is not a perfume person, she continues. Perfumes give her headaches. Even still, she says, she likes to treat herself with a nice scent or a luxurious cream every now and then, thereby repeating a frequent way of promoting women's beauty consumption; as a treat. We look at anti-wrinkle creams together and she remarks that there are so many strange words on the packages that you do not understand. There are many brands and many choices; she just does not have energy to learn about them. She does not care. Nina's refusal to choose is somewhat ironic on this market where so much effort has been invested in presenting customers with different choices. For Nina, choice seems like work, an effort not worth spending. Her refusal to choose can also be interpreted as a refusal to engage in the performances of femininity which are displayed on the perfume market; a refusal to listen to the packages and to engage in their game.

Femininity in Excess

Gunnel, a woman in her early sixties, also elaborates on the difficulty in choice brought up by Nina. Like Nina, Gunnel relates choice to herself; she does not

want to invest the required energy in order to learn all you need to be able to consume these things and she is not drawn to them. By not "being drawn to" the goods Gunnel seems to mean that she not only resists their plea to consumption; she does not want to engage in identity work with the images of femininity which the ads present. While Gunnel says that she does like to browse in stores she finds the abundance is too much for her and makes her feel sick at times and illustrates the contradictory predicament of consumer society brought up by many of the interviewed women. It is fun, but it is bad. It is good, but it should not be. Not only is it hard to choose, she find that images and products create expectations and demands on a glamorous appearance and lifestyle that she cannot recognize from her youth. She finds it difficult to identify with the images and with the luxurious lifestyle they promote and she does not think that she should have to. Like Nina, she refuses to be seduced.

When we look at a glass bottle in the shape of a snow globe she is "not fascinated", she says. To Gunnel luxury packages signify wasteful consumption. The packages speak of a femininity that Gunnel cannot identify with; a femininity which builds on glamour, surface, excess and abundance. When I ask her to characterize packages "for him" she says that they are "more robust" and more "square-shaped"; simultaneously by default defining femininity as ephemeral, excessive and round-shaped. Masculinity is not understood in terms of excess and is not presented in that way.

Falling in Love with a Bottle

Susanne, a woman in her early fifties, likes shopping. It is fun to buy and to have stuff such as clothes and chocolates, she says. Her finances do however not allow her to indulge very often; again it is a woman who brings up themes such as indulgence, passions, frivolity, restrain and guilt. Only the interviewed women spoke of their ambivalence to shopping and of the play between submission and control. None of the men said that they bought things they did not want and need. Susanne would shop more if she could, but at the same time she also thought that it is bad to consume and she would like to have a "shopping-free year". Just like Katarina, she found that shopping is bad really but liked it anyway. "I love this", she says, and picks up a package. "It has a figure in the lid, it is extra luxurious. You could by these things just for the packages. You can have it in your handbag and take it up and look at it"

> Susanne: I nearly feel like buying one of these, a lipstick, 265 sek. I will definitively buy one after the interview is over. Oh this scented candle smells divine. Terribly unnecessary, 400 sek, but so much fun! Incredible! Smells lovely and such a nice container. You can keep it when the candle has burnt out. Oh look at this; you get a whole bag with lots of stuff. Little things oh look.

As we walk around the store Susanne continues to be enthused by the products and their packages and bursts out on occasion "Oh Chanel, I used to buy that. Oh I love the smell. It is so fruity" or "Oh I love perfume bottles. I would keep this for a hundred years. You can't use it for anything so I don't know why". She associates to her youth, just like many of the other of the interviewees in their middle ages; she tells me what she used to buy and lets the sight of the bottles and packages wake memories in her of how she used to feel about the fragrances.

> Magdalena: You wouldn't buy it now?
>
> Susanne: I could if I felt that I could afford it, but I wouldn't care as much about the bottle any more. When I was young I could nearly fall in love with a bottle (laughs). I never thought of it then. I still have some bottles that I have kept.

When we get ready to leave the store Susanne remarks that she feels a certain disappointment. At a second glance there was nothing she felt like buying. Some of the perfume bottles looked cheap and not so luxurious. She was expecting to get seduced by the bottles, packages and images, but this did not happen.

Susanne's love for a bottle is interesting to compare with how Victor, a man in his mid-twenties, spoke of a similar feeling. A package that many commented upon was a bestseller, the torso-shaped *Le Male* by Jean-Paul Gaultier. Victor was however one of few who said that he liked it, but unlike Susanne or Katarina who spoke enthusiastically about the gorgeous shapes and colours of packages they liked, Victor said that he likes *Le Male* because they (the company) have managed to "do their thing", that is to follow their brand strategy through. He liked it as a marketing message. He did not speak of the bottle in terms of being seduced by it, or falling in love with it, in fact, he did not even relate it to himself; he put a business perspective on it. Victor specifically pointed out how he resents lifestyle marketing and "hates" when he gets personalized offers in the mail based on other consumer interests that he has and which a marketer has figured out that he should also like. Victor's ways of making meaning in the realms of rational thinking, such as pointing to the marketing principles behind a fragrance rather than relating to himself, his emotions or his own body can be interpreted as a performance of control and masculinity.

Passion and Gender

In this article I have used go-along interviews to explore sense-making processes of gender and perfume packaging. By walking around in stores and looking at and discussing packaging, cultural understandings of seduction, choice, consumption, taste and gender were brought to the fore.

Packages "do" gender in many ways, they make statements about what constitutes femininity and masculinity, they make gender into a liable market segment and they are interpreted by shoppers in gender terms. The women enacted femi-

ninity by placing themselves in a relationship to packaging where they were the seduced part. They seemingly placed agency in the packages and enacted a role of passive femininity, seduced by a (male?) bottle. How should this performance of a seduced woman be understood? Where bottles were even described as objects to fall in love with and where passive forms were used to talk about this attraction?

Women's consumption has historically been associated with irrationality and inabilities to resist temptation and desires. Many scholars have pointed to the great department stores of the 1800s and the contemporary discussions of these as symbols of frivolous, excessive but also dangerous consumption of which women were not in control, but subjected to by the forces of commerce. Seduction played a key role in the relationship between on one hand women and on the other goods and shop owners, as well as the emerging fields of marketing and market research, resulting in a sexual desire for goods and objects (Abelson 1989; Felski 1996; Radner 1995; Nava 1995; Ganetz 2005; Gundle & Castelli 2007).

Whereas there is an understanding of seduction in terms of passive (seduced woman) – active (male seducer), feminist scholars have also reworked this reasoning by pointing to alternative ways of understanding women's concern with consumption. Felski (1995) sees the expansion of consumption as a crucial feminist issue in terms of its "preoccupation with women's pleasure" (64). Woman in the 1800s, herself being an object and tradable good, could only be a desiring subject in relation to other objects, Felski argues and sees this relation as potentially subversive of heterosexual norms, which is why women's desire for goods has caused moral controversies (see also Radner 1995).

Several of the women spoke of goods in terms of attraction and desire which poses perfume consumption as a sphere in which it is culturally acceptable to speak of women's desire and pleasure. Even though the women located agency in packages and marketing, by dwelling in indulgence and luxury they still appeared as active and desiring sexual subjects in relation to these goods and which makes pleasure into an activity suitable for women to engage in. The pleasures associated with consumption were however often accompanied with requirements for restraint and feelings of guilt, thereby exposing cultural ambivalence to women's desire; particularly desire generated outside of heterosexuality.

Some of the men too spoke of the attraction to goods, although this was made with reference to the goods' abilities to perform particular functions. The men enacted masculinity by placing themselves as beings in control of the act of seduction/purchase. Enacting rationality works a way to avoid feminization in this feminized environment. The subtle communication of store design, images and packages acted to make the men explain packages in this way.

By understanding agency as located in the packages, the women were expecting to be seduced, thereby enacting a traditional heterosexual role of a "passive" woman. Agency, the way it is generally understood, is not with the person who is drawn to something but with the one who does the drawing, that is, in this case,

the package. The women did however not only talk about the agency of goods in relation to themselves. Consumer goods were also understood as having agency for the construction of masculinity in male partners.

To be seduced is generally understood as more passive than to seduce which is active. But why? Considering the gendered relations of seduction the definition of "to seduce" as active and "to be seduced" as passive also implies a gendered relation to agency. In forming a theory of passion and agency, Francois Cooren (2010) defines passion as something which leads or drives someone to do what she is doing, because of what animates or moves her. Etymologically passion is related to suffering, emotion, affection, desire and (deep) interest, all forces which, in the view of Cooren, have in common the idea that someone appears to be acted upon, to undergo or be animated by something which can be considered either positive or negative. Etymologically, passion relates to passivity as does action to activity. Agency, according to Cooren, should not be reduced to a performance intentionally accomplished by a human being. Artifacts, predispositions, technologies and architectural elements all do things in our daily lives. Actions cannot, he suggests, be positioned as the ultimate origin of what is happening in a given interaction, because participants are themselves moved or acted upon by specific reasons. Agency is not only a property of humans but also of things and processes such as passions, emotions, statuses, norms, rules and values among many more. For Cooren this means that any action involves passion; our actions are guided by flows coming from different directions and which animate us, make us act.

Even though the women located the agency of seduction in packages it did not mean that they took on a passive role of consumption. To let oneself be seduced by someone else, be that a person or an object, is not, with Cooren's theory, any more passive than seducing since all actions are under the influence of other beings; human or non-human. This means that the passion for fragrances is in no way more passive than the seemingly active approach of questioning stereotypes, of disregarding marketing or of presenting oneself as an actor of active choices. These actions are equally animated by the flows of passion which guide and precede them.

Perfume is a consumer good with no real function; its purpose of concealing bodily odors has long since been replaced with soap, deodorants, shampoos and running water. Realizing this condition, marketers and manufacturers have placed the meanings of fragrances in the realms of seduction; senses, sensuality, emotions, gender and sexuality. However, in spite of the recognition of the potential for expansion that including men in this market brings, manufacturers of perfume have not quite known how to speak to men with the language of seduction.

Traditional connotations between women, perfume and pleasure have meant that women in general have a higher understanding of the language of perfume; the fact that they speak of being attracted and seduced by bottles shows that they

have understood this world; they are supposed to be seduced, that is what the packages say. The women have it figured out just right; perfume is all about desire, it does not fulfill any needs. On this market it is rational to understand consumption in terms of pleasure, irrational to understand perfume in terms of needs.

What about those women who refused to be seduced? Their accounts work as an illustration of gender constructions as ongoing and performative. Gender conventions are never exhaustive and do not fix the actions or the processes of interpretation of all human subjects. Those women's refusal also illustrates that the actions of individual men and women are not fully determined by the meanings communicated by the market, but created through ongoing negotiations between people, processes and objects.

Perfume is a market that has mainly targeted women, a condition which has changed during the past two decades and which causes disruption in the representations of seduction. Whichever way this market continues to represent seduction and gender remains to be seen and points to, as maintained by Partington (1996), the need for gender researchers to engage in the pleasures of consumption.

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