



**Mittuniversitetet**  
MID SWEDEN UNIVERSITY

**WALKING BESIDE  
CHALLENGING THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS IN NORMALIZATION**

Editors:  
Eva Söderberg and Sara Nyhlén

Forum for Gender Studies  
Gender Studies at Mid Sweden University, Working papers 6 2014

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## Gender Studies at Mid Sweden University Working papers 6 2014

Mid Sweden University's Forum for Gender Studies (FGV) is an interdisciplinary and intercampus platform from which to initiate and co-ordinate gender studies at the university and beyond. This volume is the result of the FGV's mission as a productive research environment, and more specifically the workshop 'Challenging the role of emotions in normalization/individualization' arranged at Mid Sweden University's Sundsvall campus in May 2014 as part of the project 'Normalization and the neoliberal welfare state: challenging the role of and for gender theory', funded by the Swedish Research Council. The workshop concentrated on neo-liberal thinking, normalization, and art and art-space, combining critical thinking with creativity. As a result, the essays published here in the FGV's publication series focus on the emotions, neo-liberalism, methodology, and creativity from a multidisciplinary angle.

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Eva Söderberg and Sara Nyhlén

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**Peggy McIntosh** is Associate Director of the Wellesley Centers for Women at Wellesley College. She is Founder and Senior Associate of the National SEED Project on Inclusive Curriculum (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity), a project that prepares teachers from anywhere in the world to lead their own school-based monthly seminars on making curricula, teaching methods, and the school climate more gender-fair, multicultural, and inclusive, regardless of the pupils' backgrounds. In 1988 she published the ground-breaking article 'White privilege and male privilege: a personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in Women's Studies'. This article and its shorter version, 'White privilege: unpacking the invisible knapsack' (1989), have been instrumental in bringing the dimension of privilege into discussions of race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, and other aspects of human experience in which arbitrarily awarded advantage and disadvantage play a large part.

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## INTRODUCTION: IT WOULD NOT ABSORB A SINGLE TEAR

*Eva Söderberg and Sara Nyhlén*

In May 2014, a two-day workshop called ‘Challenging the role of emotions in normalization/individualization’ was arranged by Mid Sweden University’s Forum for Gender Studies. This volume, part of the Forum for Gender Studies’ publication series, is a result of that workshop, which brought together scholars from six countries and three continents in Sundsvall. One of the speakers, Ann Cvetkovich, talked about a writing workshop on public feelings and showed us a number of interesting pictures, many of them reflecting her work with artists. One piece—*Hungry Purse: The Vagina Dentata in Late Capitalism* (2006), an installation by Allyson Mitchell<sup>1</sup>—was made from second-hand crocheted afghans; Cvetkovich told us that on the question of affect, materiality, textiles, and so on, Mitchell had commented on the fact that the afghans, although they were supposed to provide both emotional and material comfort, ‘would not absorb a single tear’ because they were made of synthetic yarn.

Those words stayed with us, actualizing questions—literal and metaphorical—about feelings, affect, and the academy. What sort of ‘yarn’ is the academy made of? Is it wholly synthetic or is it able to absorb tears? It transpired that the theme of the workshop was in a way an answer to that question. In twenty-first-century research, feelings, affect, and the emotions have increasingly been hived off into a separate field, with its own terminology, workshops, conferences, and periodicals. The workshop in Sundsvall should be seen against the background of an increasing awareness of affect’s potential in unlocking insights in a wide range of areas and with a variety of methodological approaches.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Hungry Purse* is featured on the cover of Cvetkovich’s *Depression—a public feeling*. Durham: Duke University Press (2012).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham: Duke University Press (2003); Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*. New York: Routledge (2004); Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley (eds.), *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*. Durham: Duke University Press (2007); Annelie Bränström Öhman, Maria Jönsson and Ingeborg Svensson (eds.), *Att känna sig fram. Känslor i humanistisk genusforskning*. Umeå: h:ström—Text & Kultur (2011).

The Sundsvall workshop focused on feelings and emotions, but—and this is important—it also resulted in a number of emotional responses from the participants. Joy, fear, and tears: it inspired hope, it empowered. Over the course of the workshop, it became evident just how much the welfare state is on the retreat, but the glimmer of hope in this is that it allows for new types of collectivities and spaces of power. As Gabriele Griffin put it in the end of the second day of the workshop, ‘There are possibilities, beyond civil society, which the state has turned to as a substitute for itself for offering something different than what was imagined, and at the same time change how we think about that society as a resource for ourselves’. The workshop thus also homed in on questions about normalization, how neo-liberalism is normalized, and the sort of stickiness that characterizes neo-liberalism, for while many people try to resist its practices there is also something attractive about it—it’s a ‘sticky killjoy’.

It was natural enough for the workshop to consider normalization as it was held under the aegis of ‘Normalization and the neoliberal welfare state: Challenges of and for gender theory’<sup>3</sup>, a research project that also looks at the notion that neo-liberal individualism and the corresponding re(de)formation of the welfare state and new approaches to political struggle have remapped society and thus also the feminist agenda. These changes have profound consequences for people’s understanding of gender and for the possibilities of feminist theory to drive social change.

The aim of this project is to explore the challenges feminist theory faces in a neo-liberal welfare state, but also to explore the ways in which feminist theory might overcome these challenges. The project is built on a step-by-step thematic process where the first is ‘*Understanding and challenging the way normalization processes make power, values, and responsibility invisible*’ and the second is ‘*Challenging the role of emotions in normalization/individualization*’. The workshop was arranged within the framework of this second aim. The third, final theme is ‘*How to deal with differences in an ethical way? The possibility of developing a more sustainable gender theory in a neo-liberal time.*’

In the research project, *normalization* is the tool used to analyse the processes that define and produce what is considered ‘normal’, ‘natural’, or ‘right’ at a specific

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<sup>3</sup> Funded by the Swedish Research Council (2012–2015) as part of the programme of ‘long-term funding for theory and concept development’ (Diarienummer 344-2011-5104).

time and place, and at the same time to exclude certain meanings, practices, and—in the shape of ‘the other’—groups of people. Thus, inclusions and privileges are produced in parallel with exclusions, structural inequalities, and discrimination in terms of sexuality, gender, class, and ethnicity—normalization processes always take place within the ordering of power structures.

In the post-Second World War era, a societal normalization process of sorts was part of the inclusive welfare societies of many European countries. In today’s advanced neo-liberal programmes, we see new types of techniques of governing. The responsibility for achieving normalization no longer falls to the state or to collective political movements. Normality has become a matter of economics, with regulated individual choice re-signified as individuals exercising their freedom, while at the same time they are shaped to be whatever ‘the market’ wants them to be. These changes have far-reaching consequences for the understanding of gender as a structurally based concept, and for the possibilities for gender and feminist theory to produce knowledge for social change. The aim of this project is therefore to further develop the theoretical understanding of normalization from a gender perspective within the context of the neo-liberal welfare state.

Given that this volume stems from a workshop based on the second theme, ‘Challenging the role of emotions in normalization/individualization’, its focus is the fluidity of the boundary between belonging and not belonging, positioned as ‘the other’, and how it varies according to time, place, gender, ethnicity, and class. As social beings, we are all risk of being treated as ‘the other’, or indeed of becoming ‘at risk’. This idea of vulnerability is closely connected to a sense of fear, anger, grief, shame, or disgust. Maintaining this vulnerability and uncertainty is an important part of normalization’s power. A key research question here is the way in which neo-liberalism’s governmentality is created in a regime of fear.

The workshop was multidisciplinary, the mix of disciplines and researchers being evident right from the start when Annelie Bränström Öhman opened a session on ‘Emotional encounters in feminist academic writing and fiction’ by interviewing Mia Franck and Maria Margareta Österholm on the question of emotional epistemologies, interstices, and translation in various genres of feminist writing and thinking. Both Franck and Österholm started their careers in literary studies intertwined with gender studies. Quoting bel hooks – ‘All academics write, but not

all see themselves as writers'<sup>4</sup>—Bränström Öhman raised the question of writing, especially considering the fact that she and Franck write both academic and literary genres. For Franck, 'the researcher' and 'the author' are equally active in her literary work, but not at the same time;<sup>5</sup> she uses the two perspectives for different purposes. For Österholm, writing in different genres emerges from 'the same place' and the same interest—girl, girlhood, and so on. In all her endeavours, the term *gurlisque*—evoking girl, grotesque, and burlesque in equal measure—has been very important,<sup>6</sup> offering her other ways of thinking about—and beyond—girlhood proper. She sees gurlisque as a mix of feminism, femininity, cuteness, disgusting, and the grotesque. Thus in its assorted literary and artistic manifestations, the gurlisque and its norm-breaking dimensions may provoke a great deal of emotion and affect. In a later presentation at the workshop, Mia Österlund used the term gurlisque to analyse the character Liten Skär ('Little Pink') in a controversial series of books for toddlers by Stina Wirsén.<sup>7</sup>

Other questions raised by Bränström Öhman were whether it is possible to see reading, writing, and doing research as having no sharp limits between them. Is it possible for an academic to imagine a reader who is both an academic and a writer? According to Bränström Öhman, something gets inevitably lost 'when you draw the line between facts and fiction, academic writing and literary writing, too tight.'

The session with Bränström Öhman, Franck, and Österholm, with its inclusive atmosphere, in many ways set the tone for the workshop. For those of us more familiar with political-science perspectives, the workshop was a new experience

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<sup>4</sup> bel hooks, *Remembered Rapture: the writer at work*. London: Women's Press (1999).

<sup>5</sup> Mia Franck, *Frigjord oskuld: Heterosexuellt mognadsimperativ i svensk ungdomsroman*. Turku: Åbo Akademis förlag (2009); and *Martrådar*. Helsinki: Schildts & Söderströms (2013).

<sup>6</sup> For Gurlisque, see Lara Glenum and Arielle Greenberg (eds.), *Gurlisque: the new grrly, grotesque, burlesque poetics*. Philadelphia: Saturnalias Books (2010); Maria Margareta Österholm, *Den unga F:s bekännelser*. Stockholm: X:publishing (2011); and her *Ett flicklaboratorium i valda bitar. Skeva flickor I svenskspråkig prosa från 1980 till 2005*. Stockholm: Rosenlarv Förlag (2012).

<sup>7</sup> Mia Österlund, 'Att formge en flicka: Flickskapets transformationer hos Pija Lindenbaum och Stina Wirsén', in Eva Söderberg, Mia Österlund and Bodil Formark (eds.), *Flicktion: Perspektiv på flickan i fiktionen*. Malmö: Universus Academic Press (2013), 168–87.

because it not only elaborated on the emotions, but also allowed for emotional responses from the participants. The multidisciplinary setting opened up for various discussions where the participants often prefaced their ideas with ‘This is just a thought’, ‘Perhaps’, ‘What if—?’ and ‘I haven’t thought this through, but—’, and in this sense the participants were not afraid of ‘feeling like frauds’.<sup>8</sup>

In many ways, the workshop revolved around a sense of refusal—a refusal to accept the neo-liberalization of the academy, not to mention of society at large. With so many personal experiences in life, academia, and research shared among the participants, a notion of action space took shape. The starting point for the workshop was Patricia Ticineto Clough who talked about the experience of measurement and how places such as schools and care facilities are given over to control rather than care. And the constant measurement of what we call feelings in the neo-liberal society.

The workshop also raised questions about working conditions, with Gunilla Olofsdotter, Angelika Sjöstedt-Landén, and Magnus Granberg focusing on the ‘workfare’ policy so dominant in Sweden today, where the fear of losing one’s job is so strong that it creates subordinate, obedient subject-employees.

The various sessions of the workshop came together to make a single thread, with a core multidisciplinary strength. The various sessions’ themes were woven together into a fabric that did indeed have the ability to absorb tears. But this also raised the question of privilege. What of the workshop participants’ privileged positions, and how could the weave of the fabric be extended to include others? Perhaps ‘walking beside’ as a research practice is a part of that answer. Much of the workshop was given over to the main themes discussed in terms of art, art-space methods, and creative non-fiction, and the focus on creativity, the emotions, methodology, and neo-liberalism made for a unique event. The essays that resulted are published here, organized into four sections.

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<sup>8</sup> The quotation refers to Peggy McIntosh, ‘Feeling Like a Fraud’, *Work In Progress*, No. 12, Stone Center Working Papers Series, Wellesley, MA (1985); see also Maria Jönsson & Anna Rådström and Peggy McIntosh in this volume.



## Neo-liberalism and emotion

'How do members of dominant groups establish and maintain who will count as being "normal" and thus "insiders"?' is the opening question in the first essay. The answer is the emotions. In 'Emotions and normalization', Siv Fahlgren starts from a personal memory of meeting an alcoholic on the morning bus to work. Seeking out the generally applicable in her memory, she uses it to discuss the place of emotion in processes in which some people will be accounted normal and worthy of inclusion, and others to be excluded as abnormal. In her conclusion, she wonders whether emotions could be mobilized for resistance, working for change instead of reproduction, justification, and normalization.

Fahlgren's essay centres on a piece of memory work reflecting an everyday experience: going to work by bus. 'Everyday' is also the word for E in an alphabet created by Ann Cvetkovich 'because feeling bad is a very ordinary and Everyday experience'. In 'Writing with *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad*', Cvetkovich presents a collaborative project in which scholarship and art are combined in interesting and fruitful ways. Her essay presents reflections on the various iterations of her collaborative abecediary project. To her mind, the project has been a way both to create theory by performing it and to teach theory. The genre of the abecediary also enhances the use of keywords, another pedagogical genre for theory. During a writing workshop run by Cvetkovich at the Sundsvall meeting, participants were invited to see keywords as portals and to explore their associative power and capacity to open the mind to new ideas.

In the *Alphabet of Feeling Bad*, A is for anxiety, while one word for F could have been fear. In 'A regime of fear?' Gabriele Griffin examines the articulation of fear in popular culture, more specifically two works of crime fiction from 1991 and 2001 by the Swedish author Henning Mankell. These novels, Griffin suggests, act as cultural barometers for the normalization of certain regimes of fear associated with immigration in the Swedish context. Using the novels and the theoretical writings of Arjun Appadurai on the 'Fear of Small Numbers' (2006, 2009), Griffin considers regimes of fear as a technology employed by neo-liberalism. She concludes by raising a question that could carry us beyond neo-liberalism.

## Privilege and emotion

One important keyword in the next three essays is privilege. The first, 'The politics of men's emotions' by Bob Pease, addresses male privilege and interrogates men's emotional investment in male supremacy and violence. Pease sets out to explore educational strategies that use emotion to challenge men's resistance to acknowledging and addressing male privilege and its abuse. It is essential that care-giving and caring masculinities are fostered, for, according to Pease, they are

both an essential part of promoting gender equality and a way for men to transform negative emotions into positive ones.

In the second essay, 'Investigating privileging in relation to asylum seekers', Jonny Bergman argues that Swedish Immigration Service staff have to deal daily with the dilemma of enjoying a privileged position in relation to the asylum seekers, while being challenged both by asylum seekers and the public sphere in general. Bergman argues that to understand this twofold position it is necessary to investigate the role played by emotions in reproducing privilege and, further, in investigating and challenging it. Such an investigation promises to shed light on how discourses, structures, and practices sustain and normalize certain ways of privileging.

The third essay, 'On being a race traitor', has a personal point of departure: Ulrika Schmauch, a white 'Swedish' woman, announces her race treachery due to her marriage to a black practising Muslim from Somalia. In light of her own experiences—visible in the essay in the shape of personal narratives—she discusses this position. Without denying her own privilege, she notices how it can heighten one's sensibility of racism and how much it helps to look at the world from two perspectives at once. Her aim is to problematize the dichotomy of 'victim of racism' versus 'not victim of racism', which she suggests should be understood as more complex and contradictory. She advocates an understanding of racism that takes into account its dual nature.

### **Neo-liberalism, fear, and fraudulence**

The essays in this section deal with different types of fears in the context of neo-liberal governmentality, and also what the emotional effects of neo-liberalism might be—'feeling like a fraud', for example. The first essay, 'A regime of fear?', is based on four narratives that resulted from collective memory work by Siv Fahlgren, Katarina Giritli Nygren, Anders Johansson, and Eva Söderberg, who wrote down key moments of fear: fear of losing control, of insecurity, of (in)visibility, of becoming an affect alien. After a collective process of reading, listening, and rewriting, the narratives were analysed, again in a collective process. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's work, Fahlgren, Giritli Nygren, Johansson, and Söderberg see human emotion as expressing historical, cultural, and social practices that form individual as well as collective bodies. In their epilogue, they question the way they embarked on their memory work with almost prearranged

feelings. One explanation is the key concepts they had been working on in the project—normalization, discipline, and governmentalities. Like Griffin, they conclude that their memories are examples of how neo-liberalism is upheld by a regime of fear.

In the second essay in this section, 'Still feeling like a fraud?', Maria Jönsson and Anna Rådström start with McIntosh's eponymous paper from 1985,<sup>9</sup> in which McIntosh dissected the feeling of fraudulence within the academy and other spheres in the US. She took a 'double look' at the phenomenon, and suggested that a feeling of fraudulence is something to avoid and to embrace at the same time. Jönsson and Rådström apply McIntosh's critical thinking to today's neo-liberal academic in Sweden to see what it reveals. Is it possible, they wonder, to articulate a language of failure within the academy today? What does it mean, and how should one react toward people who actually do so?

Jönsson and Rådström consider 'Feeling like a fraud' to be 'one of the gems in the archive of feminist critical thinking'. Peggy McIntosh is still active in the field, and after the workshop in Sundsvall she was invited to comment on Jönsson and Rådström's essay. In 'Feeling like a fraud: a joyful re-meeting at the Möbius crossroads' she reacts to the fact that academic life in the US and Sweden shows so many parallels. She states that she shares with Jönsson and Rådström 'alternative views that could bring better balance to institutions that claim to be in search of knowledge, for the betterment of human life'. In the essay, she makes the connection to her other work about America's problems seen through the prism of fraudulence. Indeed, like 'Feeling like a fraud', this essay serves to reveal the discourses and structures in Swedish society today.

### **From the youngest to the oldest**

In the fourth section, the essays span from picture books and women's wardrobes to rural places, exploring different fictitious and real conditions, tracking a wide range of feelings and using various methods. In 'Death in Swedish Picture Books', Eva Söderberg discusses how death, grief, and mourning are dealt with in Nordic picture books published in the last fifty years. Children's literature mirrors society, but is also part of the discourses that can influence the world outside the books. Söderberg shows how picture books carry over old patterns and motifs, and also how they challenge literary taboos. In conclusion, she problematizes the way children's literature is thought of as a mere reflection

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<sup>9</sup> McIntosh 1985.

of society and its complexities. Is it possible, she asks, to see in picture books about death a reciprocal connection between rituals and ceremonies on the one hand and on the other a neo-liberal society where individualism is an ideal?

The next essay is part of Karin Lövgren's ongoing research exploring the cultural meanings of ageing. ' "Fun" as a resource' uses wardrobe interviews with women aged between 62 and 94, and using garments as prompts when discussion transitions, continuances, and ageing. Up to now, the wardrobe interview as a method has not been extended to the elderly, which makes Lövgren a pioneer. One thing that caught her attention is that several women, when describing their thinking about their clothing, used the emotive term 'fun'. Lövgren examines the word, its Swedish translations and their connotations, and those aspects that earn certain items of clothing a label as 'fun', discussing how these terms are used as strategies by the interviewees, who are all members of a culture that renders ageing women invisible.

Ageing is the subject of the last essay too: 'Emotional aspects of growing old in rural places' by Sara Nyhlén, Beverly Leipert, and Katja Gillander Gådin. Their thesis is that growing old in a rural area is for many reasons rather different than growing old in a built-up area. The study of ageing, emotion, and rurality warrants serious investigation if the health of the rural elderly is to be effectively supported. How, for example, can different aspects of the emotional layers of growing old in rural places be captured by the use of different kinds of methods? The methods discussed are quantitative surveys, in-depth interviews, and a photovoice project, with studies conducted in Sweden and Canada. To conclude, Nyhlén, Leipert, and Gillander Gådin endorse the use of multiple research methods in order to deepen our understanding of ageing and emotions in rural contexts.

### **Walking beside**

The final essay by Nyhlén, Leipert, and Gillander Gådin raises the sort of questions about research, emotions, and ethics that were touched on by other participants. The workshop followed up on these in the final session: a discussion of 'The normality of emotions' by Gabriele Griffin, Ann Cvetkovich, and Patricia Ticineto Clough. The questions enumerated by Griffin include handling vulnerable subjects, dealing with difference in an ethical manner, and the interrelation of the everyday and normalization. Clough's and Cvetkovich's responses are examples of how they, by being sensitive and receptive in their encounters with artists,

students, and young adults in multi-ethnic areas, had developed new methods and transformed existing methods. Clough, for example, had walked around her old neighbourhood, whereupon one young person after another from the area joined her, and the result of their walking, talking, and joint creativity was an interacting autobiography with music, dance, video, and photography presented at a remix festival as a performance of shared experiences. This led her to reflect on the quality of the relationships we as researchers maintain in what we think of as research. Unlike if it had been a therapeutic situation, Clough and these young adults had, in her words, been 'walking side by side'.

This actual 'walking side by side' offered an image that was picked up on, developed by the collective, and duly questioned by the workshop participants. This discussion turned on research methods, specifically in relation to ethics, access, privilege, (in)visibility, normalization, and the academy in a neo-liberal age. How can walking beside someone be used in research practice? Is it really possible to walk side by side instead of 'looking at' them? Does it presume some sort of equality in a structural relationship that does not exist? How do walking beside and other experimental methods go together with neo-liberalism?

The metaphors 'side by side' or 'walking beside' capture many of the themes discussed during the workshop—and equally they indicate the important issues to come in the larger project. That third theme concerns *'How to deal with differences in an ethical way? The possibility of developing a more sustainable gender theory in a neo-liberal time'*, and will be the focus of the project's efforts during the autumn of 2014 and spring of 2015. The importance of the metaphor on different levels, both during the workshop and for the last year of the project, is therefore highlighted in the title of this anthology, *Walking Beside: Challenging the Role of Emotions in Normalization*.

# **Neoliberalism and emotion**



## CHAPTER 1

### EMOTIONS AND NORMALIZATION: ANALYSING AND SUBVERTING THE PROCESSES OF NORMALIZATION

*Siv Fahlgren*

How do members of dominant groups establish and maintain who will count as being 'normal' and thus 'included'? In Fahlgren (2011; 2013) and Fahlgren et al. (2011) I have analysed, in the Swedish context, the way dominant groups secure power by creating 'outsiders' whom they categorize as being not-normal, subjecting them to different normalizing practices.<sup>10</sup> In this essay, in thinking through emotion's contribution to such normalization processes, I want to focus on how emotions matter in the power and politics of normalization. My focus, though, is not how emotions draw us into subordination or the creation of 'the other'—or 'outsiderhood', a much-used political concept in Sweden in recent years—but the very condition of 'normality' or privileged position. Central to the analysis is the creation of 'the other', but only as it ties in with the emotional work done by members of dominant groups in relation to themselves and others, in order to accomplish their own normality. As part of a larger Swedish project on normalization (Fahlgren et al. 2011; Fahlgren 2013) I argue that all members of dominant groups are engaged in similar normalization processes, and one way to reconsider such processes is to analyse them in relation to emotions.

My analysis centres on a piece of memory work I have done following Frigga Haug (1999) and Karin Widerberg (1995), telling a story where I meet an alcoholic on the morning bus, from the perspective of an unnamed 'she'. This is in order to create a degree of distance, but also to be able to see what about the story is more generally applicable. The story I have chosen is a personal memory of taking the bus to work on a cold, dark Swedish winter's morning. One of the reasons why I do remember it is that afterwards I could not really understand my own reaction, since I was once a social worker, used to interacting with alcoholics. In this analysis, I accord emotion a central position.

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<sup>10</sup> I would like to extend my warmest thanks to Professor Bronwyn Davies for many thought-provoking discussions on emotions and normalization, and for taking the time to read and comment on my work to such beneficial effect. I would also like to thank my dear colleagues at the Forum for Gender Studies and in various normalization projects for so many inspiring seminars and, specifically, their invaluable comments on this essay.



## Survey of the field

Davies et al. (2001) and Søndergaard (2012) have shown that belonging to any social group as a normal member is not something that can be made permanent. It requires constant vigilance. Work must be done, and continue to be done, to secure recognition as a normal member of one's group. Normality has a slippery status that can be lost very quickly. It is both tightly regulated and unstable (Foucault 1990), and something that the individual both strives to hold onto and, at the same time and to some extent, distances themselves from. To be 'just like everyone else' may ensure one's inclusion, but it may also bring derision or contempt for not being original, not having a 'mind of one's own', and for not being recognizable as this person and no-one else. This complex dynamic is usually implicit and is not readily opened up for inspection.

The securing of group membership, in Butler's analysis (1997a), is established through repeated, habitual recitations of the normative order as both ubiquitous and morally correct. This recitation establishes the conditions of intelligibility, and it bestows power on those who are deemed to be intelligible at the expense of those who are not. Those who are deemed to be unintelligible are taken to threaten the way the world is and ought to be (Davies 2008)—that is, they are perceived to threaten the stability of life-as-usual and so disrupt the moral order. If each individual is potentially an outcast, the maintenance of the conditions of intelligibility is important work for survival (Fahlgren 2005).

Yet habitual recitation and the acts of power it legitimates are not necessarily open to reflexive inspection or strategic manipulation. Accomplishing oneself as an original individual involves a disavowal of dependence on the discourses through which one is spoken into existence (Butler 1997b). And further, as Butler points out, it is the very *illegibility* of the conditions of intelligibility that secures their continuity:

the conditions of intelligibility are themselves formulated in and by power, and this normative exercise of power is rarely acknowledged as an operation of power at all. Indeed we may classify it among the most implicit forms of power, *one that works through its illegibility*: it escapes the terms of legibility that it occasions. That power continues to act in illegible ways is one source of its relative invulnerability. ... The one who speaks according to the norms that govern speakability is not necessarily following a rule in a conscious way. One speaks according to a tacit set of norms that are not always explicitly coded as rules. (Butler 1997a, 134, my emphasis)

The 'normal', as it is embedded in the conditions of intelligibility, thus appears self-evident to those who read the world in those terms. The normal is

unexpressed, uncategorized, colourless, genderless. It is implicit, not explicit, in the processes of normalization (Fahlgren et al. 2011; Hacking 1990; Pease 2010; 2011).

### ***The role of emotions***

In this essay I am interested in the role that emotions play in those normalization processes. I will follow Sarah Ahmed (2004) in describing emotions as historical, cultural, and social practices that form individual and collective bodies alike. Emotions in this sense are not something 'I' have, located in my individual body, but movements in time and place, movements between individuals that form their bodies. It is through emotions, or how we respond to subjects and objects, that 'I' and 'we' are shaped in the same movement as one and 'the other'. We are one another's precondition for what kind of life we will live, what identities are possible. Thus our social location is integral to our emotions; emotions are constituted and conditioned, experienced and expressed through/in a social location that makes them (im)possible (Ahmed 2004, 4–12; Bränström Öhman et al. 2011).

I am particularly interested in the way emotions work to produce the position of the legitimate subject, the 'I' or 'we' position, while simultaneously generating the 'not me' or 'the other' position. I am interested in how our emotions are normalized within social contexts so as to fit into and (re)produce power relations and hierarchies between subjects. But I will also ask how emotions might be engaged in subversive challenges to normalizing practices.

It is central to the analysis that 'doing normal' be understood as a multivalent and ambivalent movement. Securing a place in a dominant group is only ever temporarily accomplished. But what will be counted as doing normal is always subject to change (Foucault 1990; Søndergaard 2012). Normality is not an entity but a process. There are ways in which passing as normal is a requirement for gaining access to various forms of power and privilege. Nevertheless, we become attached to the predictability that recitation and repetition afford us. Our safe place in the social fold, always at risk of being lost (Søndergaard 2012; Davies et al. 2001), is secured through recitation and repetition, but *also* through the creative invention of the new (Deleuze and Guattari 1994).

In this article I situate the analysis in the space in between self and other, beginning with the emotions that characterize the forces of normalization. The conceptual model I develop here is one that offers an insight into how normativity works on and through the bodies of members of dominant groups. In what way does normalization contain emotions? I hope to make the subjective processes of establishing and maintaining normality more legible, but also to discuss other

possibilities that might expand the conditions of intelligibility beyond their current illegible certainties. Finally, I will suggest that members of dominant groups, who routinely hold onto their ascendancy by casting others as not-normal, have an ethical responsibility to question their ascendant position, asking what it accomplishes—and what is made to matter in their judgement (Barad 2007; Davies 2008).

### **Doing ‘normality’—the story of a bus journey**

She is sitting on the bus and, as is her habit, is watching people as they get on. She feels such warmth for all these people who are struggling on with daily life in the darkness, cold, and snow. When they reach that notorious part of town, a drunk man gets on. His trousers are hanging low and he has a problem getting his wallet out to pay. Finally he has managed to pay and is looking for a seat. For a fraction of a second she thinks of the empty seat beside her—then he’s sitting there. But if there’s one thing she should be able to handle after all her years as a social worker, it’s drunks. He starts to talk to her, loud but unclear. She looks out of the window, but he continues insistently. She gives curt answers to his questions. He smells bad, of alcohol, sweat, urine—God knows what. The people around them look at him—and at her. She wishes she’d reached her stop—continuing looking out the window, pretending she does not hear.

The storyteller describes herself comfortably watching people as they get on the early bus to work. As she usually does, she sits there experiencing a loving openness to the other workers in their daily struggles in the cold winter morning. But her emotions seem to change as the drunken man moves toward the empty seat beside her. What is this change about? Is she worried about him? Not really, as she is actually very used to alcoholics. Rather she becomes intensely aware of the eyes of the other passengers looking at him—and at her. No longer gazing at them benignly, she feels herself to be the one being gazed at, with the drunk’s identity, his otherness, invading her own sense of self (Davies 2006).

The love she feels for the other bus passengers is of the sort that secures the subject’s relation to the world. It is an inclusive emotion, and she is herself included in that loving feeling. But the problem with love is that it can be taken away, Ahmed (2004) writes. The anxiety she feels as the drunk approaches may stem from that possibility of loss. It seems to spill over into fearful anticipation of what might come—and not really from him, but from the others on the bus. It is rarely possible to relax completely into a taken-for-granted condition of normality; being normal must be constantly guarded. Is it her normality that is threatened, and is that what evokes an emotion of fear?

### *The emotion of fear*

She is not afraid of an old alcoholic; after all, she used to be a social worker. Rather, fear works here by establishing the other as unnerving, not in himself, but insofar as his difference threatens to envelop the storyteller as he moves towards her. She recoils in fear that involves a turning towards a 'fellow feeling' of life as it *should* be (Ahmed 2004, 64–74), a life where she numbers, with dignity, among the bus passengers on their way to work, and not someone who is at risk of being looked down on contemptuously.

It may be that fear brings the woman on the bus closer to the object of her love, the community of passengers, at the same time as it transforms the man who is approaching her into an object of fear; fear and the expressions of contempt create 'that which I am not'. In this way, fear at the same time brings their bodies together and moves them apart. Securing the subject is not only about securing a border that already exists, nor is fear only fear of what we are 'not'; rather fear and anxiety *create* the effects of borders, defining that which we are 'not' (Ahmed 2004, 62–76). This performativity, in Butler's sense of the word (2004), is integral to the processes of normalization. The fear and anxiety experienced by the woman on the bus are not an invention, but a reiteration.

The fear of degeneration or disintegration thus comes to be associated with some bodies more than others. In Ahmed's terms, the narratives that seek to preserve the present through anxiety and fear lodge that which is fearful in those bodies, which take on fetishistic qualities as objects of fear (2004, 78–9). In this sense it is not the particular man on the bus who is fearsome, but what he has come to represent.

In her study of bullying, Søndergaard describes how the ever-present possibility of losing secure membership can create a generalized anxiety, which she argues is a complex relation between *social exclusion anxiety* and practices of contempt and worthiness production, where bullying is not the product of individual pathologies but a feature of social groups and the necessity for individuals to belong to groups—to exist in relation to others (2012, 361–362). In Søndergaard's analysis, the practices of bullying are integral to the desire for continuing existence, since one's continuing existence necessarily involves group membership. People's practices of contempt towards others are a way of securing their own group membership.

Further, Davies (2011a) has shown how bullying, far from being the work of pathological individuals, may be driven by an intense desire to maintain the moral order—or the rigid striations of the group. What will count as normal and acceptable fluctuates through these practices as individuals strive for their own

survival within the conditions of possibility that are integral to their group's life. The bus incident is not really an instance of bullying, of course, but it does display a similar attempt to survive within a threatened 'normality' that never is a stable entity, since its meaning shifts with the context. The 'normality' on a morning bus in the north of Sweden, a very specific place and time, is to sit quietly in your seat and perhaps surreptitiously watch one's fellow bus passengers or speak in a low voice to someone you know. Reading the story this way, I would say that it is not really the objection of the other but the *inclusion* of the subject that creates the norm.

### ***Normalization, power, and the emotion of disgust***

When the drunk sits down next to the woman on the bus, she cannot help being filled with sense of offence and disgust, shrinking from him as if he might contaminate her with his smell and his drunkenness and his voice, which is much too loud. And acting on this impulse, she gives him the cold shoulder, turning away from him to look out of the bus window. But he is not easy to shake off. She finds herself abjecting him, actively constituting (and making visible) the boundary that assigns him to otherness, consigning him to the category this-is-what-I-am-not and even this-is-what-we-on-the-bus-are-not—we normal working people who know how to behave—opening up the space between her and the rest of the bus passengers. She is a little surprised at her emotional reaction, since she used to work with men like him in the past.

The movement away from him, looking out of the window instead of at him, is the work of disgust; this is what disgust does. Disgust pulls us away from the object in a way that feels involuntary, as if our bodies were thinking for us; distancing, rejecting, affected by what one has rejected. It is as if the object of disgust threatens her by the possibility that what is 'me' or 'us' might slide into 'not-me' or 'not-us'. We each want to protect ourselves, through practices of abjection, from all that is 'not-me/not-us' (Kristeva 1982; Ahmed 2004). In the same movement, the object of disgust is materialized as a drunken body. In this embodied disapproval, she expresses what she feels, but at the same time it is an example of how normalized behaviour is performed, and thus how emotions play a vital part in normalization processes.

Ahmed asks, 'Does disgust work to maintain power relations through how it maintains bodily boundaries?' (2004, 88). In her analysis, disgust is not only about threatened boundaries, but also about objects that to the subject seem 'lower', or beneath them. This is intensified in relation to the lower regions of the body—the smell of 'sweat, urine—God knows what': 'Disgust at "that which is below" functions to maintain the power relation between above and below, through which

“aboveness” and “belowness” become properties of particular bodies, objects and spaces.’ But this position of ‘aboveness’ is maintained only at the cost of a certain vulnerability—an openness to being affected by those who are felt to be below (Ahmed 2004, 89).

Though the threat to her normality is not only a classed threat (in terms of class), but very much class intersecting gender. His smell, his bodily presence, the drawing of attention to the lower regions of his body, becomes a reminder of his—and her—sexuality. In a heteronormative cultural context such as Sweden this woman is already positioned as the other (sex), a vulnerably unequal position that she brings with her onto the bus. Also, in the case of disgust, something more than a subject and an object is generated on the bus; there is also a community of shared witnessing if the disgust is to have its effect. In pulling away in disgust, the woman on the bus calls upon others to witness and share her condemnation of the disgusting object. According to Nussbaum (2004, 14), disgust has been used throughout history to exclude and marginalize groups of people who come to embody a dominant group’s fear of its own animality. In doing so, it also embodies the dominant group in its ‘normal’ and privileged position—it also work as *inclusion*. Thus it could be said that emotion has a very central place in these normalization processes. With all the emotions present between the people on the bus, you could say this woman, from her vulnerable position, is engaged in the normalization process of doing herself as an honourable middle-class woman —at the same time as doing ‘the others’ other’. But exclusion at the same time tends to become invisible; we should all be included, we do not want to see ‘the other’.

### ***The naturalness and invisibility of normalcy***

The processes by which an individual secures group membership are multivalent. Recognition as a normal member of one’s group is necessary. Yet too enthusiastic or earnest a claim to normalcy is suspect in those cultural settings where normality is understood as a natural quality of individual subjects, and, as such, reflecting their essence. In such a reading of normality, rigorous training in normality, and governmental forces demanding normal performances, are made invisible.

This is the paradox that lies at the heart of the normalization process. Normality must appear to be *natural*, and the forces brought to bear on any individual to conform to the norms, both historically and in the present, must be invisible. The forces exerted on the ‘abnormal’ individual are extreme, although they are at work on and through the so-called normal individual and abnormal individual alike. At the same time, the status of those who are read as being normal is understood as having been accomplished naturally, effortlessly, unselfconsciously, even though in fact it takes enormous effort to pass as normal—washing every day, ensuring

one is not emitting unpleasant odours or sounds in public, moving your body in an acceptable way, engaging in appropriate forms of deference and dominance, and so on and so on.

In a further twist, in such a system of thought, one's own adherence to any of the tenets of 'normality' should be open to reflexive scrutiny. It is not enough to follow what is right or correct, one must engage with it critically and thoughtfully, and even with humour. Television programmes, for example, which capture the (extreme) essence of normality and hold it up for ridicule, often become compulsive and compulsory viewing.<sup>11</sup> They portray an exaggerated normality in which viewers can both empathically find themselves and laugh at themselves.

### **The role of emotions in the normalization process**

So far I have argued that normality is not fixed since its meaning shifts with the intra-active space and with categorizations and their cultural histories (Barad 2007). We all have to do 'normal' if we are to pass as normal (Fahlgren 2005), even while we should not desire it too much or cling to it too tightly. Applied in a social situation—witness the episode on the bus—the meaning of 'normal' easily shifts from something ordinary and neutral ('we' ordinary bus passengers) to become something desirable or ideal ('we' who are not drunk in the early morning, but are responsible working people who know how to behave) (Hacking 1990; Piuva 2005). 'Normality' is thus in danger of slipping away from this storyteller on the bus. The habitual recitations of herself that create the stable illusion of normality, are interfered with by the presence of the drunk man beside her. Her identity and sense of belonging become insecure. She is not known to everyone on the bus, and so she cannot trust them to continue to treat her as if she is normal.

A similar emotion is recounted in an interview by Peter the social worker in Fahlgren (2011). He works at the Family House, a social work centre for families whose children are considered to be at extreme risk. Families who are found not to be coping adequately with child care (that is, not doing normal parenting) can be required to live in this institutionalized setting for a period of time, while their behaviour is monitored and corrected by social workers. Peter recognizes in himself the familiar moment of panic that he says they all experience when out with one of the families who do not yet know 'how to behave' in public places:

We usually say when we come back from one of those intense experiences: Oh, today I wish I'd had a Family House hat on. You know, a hat with a little streamer

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<sup>11</sup> For example, in Sweden *Svensson, Svensson*; in Australia, *Kath & Kim* and *Summer Heights High*; in the US, *The Simpsons*; and in the UK, *Creature Comforts*.

on it that says 'the Family House' [laughs]. That's when you've had to deal with someone who's really crazy, who can't function socially. (Fahlgren 2011, 32)

This familiar emotion arises because there is nothing that makes his difference from the family he works with visible or legible to passers-by. He jokes about his desire to signal to the community of 'ordinary' people that he is not part of this family, not one of 'them', by fantasizing about a hat that would show he was a social worker on duty, working with the family. In other studies, the desire to signal one's membership of the category of normal people has been shown to be invoked by being associated with something less than flattering or even openly pathological (Jacobsson 2007), or in the face of an assertion that one does not belong to, say, the dominant ethnic group (Lundström 2007).

The fantasy hat with the streamer would serve as the same kind of signal as the woman on the bus bodily turning away from the drunk. The 'crazy' family and the drunk are sticky signs to be abjected through dissociation; the drunk and the family become 'the other' in the same movement, the emotion through which the woman, or Peter, become 'normal'. Strong emotions of fear and disgust are movements that push the other away, and literally put them in their place (Ahmed 2004). But in the same movement, the normal subject is produced through *inclusion*.

### ***Conflicting emotions at the very centre of normalization***

The conflicting emotions, or the growing conflict, described in the memory of the bus journey between the feelings of failing to live up to her own obligations (she should not be that disturbed, she knows how to handle the situation) and fearing her own position being called into question, demonstrate how normalization is enacted. As an example of how normalized behaviour is performed, she expresses what she feels by how she reacts, by the emotional responses of her embodied disapproval. At the same time and in the same movement, that which is constituted as lying 'outside the normal' is itself constitutive of the inside, holding it together. As Butler (1997a, 180) explains:

This 'outside' is the defining limit or exteriority to a given symbolic universe, one which, were it imported into that universe, would destroy its integrity and coherence. In other words, what is set outside, or repudiated from the symbolic universe in question is precisely what binds that universe together *through its exclusion*.

This story enables us to glimpse the ways in which these processes are part of everyday life. Each of us, I would argue, is caught up in the practices of normalization, in asserting the rightness of our accepted moral framework, in establishing hierarchies and values concerning good and evil, morality and



immorality, gender, class, and ethnicity. Normalization practices privilege 'sameness'. Cultural images and practices are created according to a constructed or proposed homogeneity; one's co-participants in life are identified as like-minded, physically similar, from similar families and similar to 'us', secured through recitations and repetitions. All of this is designed to secure social privileges for dominant groups (Essed 2004).

What this analysis shows is that it is not the exclusion or abjection per se, but rather *inclusion* that creates the norm. We should all be included, we should all be normal. In a way, the exclusion is made invisible: she gives the drunk man the cold shoulder, we do not want to see 'the other'. I would argue that the very meaning of normalization thus has an emotional content—one that is masked by most theories of 'the normal', for example by talking about statistical normality or the normal as the common, the ordinary (Hacking 1990), not at all something that forces you to deal with difficult emotions.

### **Challenging normalization processes: from emotions to ethics**

The story about the bus journey shows how emotions work to repeatedly differentiate between subjects and between lives. Differentiation serves to secure the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate lives, securing (for some) membership of dominant groups (Butler 1997). Emotional responses work as forms of judgements; they invest in social norms, norms that bear the cost of injustice and pain (Ahmed 2004). Emotions stick to morality and justice, and thus become central investments in the normalization process. By analysing this process and the habitual recitation of the normal order that is implicit in it (Butler 1997), I seek to challenge the normative exercise of power it consists of.

To read normalization processes in this way is to make visible the violence, pain, and cost that the processes generate for the one who is 'othered'. So far my focus has been the emotions of the (dominant) storyteller. Clearly we must ask, with a nod to ethics involved, about the emotions of the one who is othered. And we must ask how else the storyteller might have reacted—what other emotions might she have mobilized? Could she have included the drunk in her love of the bus passengers as they got on with the day, without repeating the violence inherent in the emotions of fear and disgust? Could she act in the name of love—without that love becoming a conditional love, requiring the other to live up to the (imagined) ideals of the community of early morning bus passengers?

Given the way I have described love, nothing much would change, since to love the abject verges on the liberal politics of charity (Ahmed 2004, 141). Such love would make the loving subject (here the woman on the bus) feel better for having

extended love to someone who is presumed to be unloved, but at the same time it would sustain the power relationships that compel people to show charitable love in this way. Sympathy and compassion may work in the same way, elevating some subjects over others in terms of what one can give to another. Is there a possibility of recognition that does not re-establish the hierarchy of power? Is there a way to be moved by the other that does not include moving away from them; that is not about moving on, but being moved as a form of work (Ahmed 2004, 201)?

There is violence in the dual act of recognition and judgement in this story. The role of emotions in the normalization process seems to block the possibility of being open to the other in a way that does not place the other in a lesser or even abject position. To me, feminism is about making the effort to see or read the world from a different angle, taking nothing for granted—not a normalized point of view. It is about asking questions ('What can we do?') rather than taking the normalized line ('That's just the way it is'); it is about taking on the 'the pain of others' (Ahmed 2004, 174).

Based on Williams' discussion (2003) of finger-pointing and those singled out for it, I am able to conclude that, regardless of whether we point the finger or are bystanders, we all have a responsibility for the (discriminating) discourses and practices that are maintained historically and culturally. There are no exceptions from this responsibility. Nor does individualization, nor the neo-liberal way of giving the individual responsibility for her so-called 'free choices', cancel out such a collective responsibility, although it does *conceal* it and makes mobilization for change and resistance even more difficult. A much more complicated question is how to shoulder a more justifiable responsibility? Thus the next question will be whether emotions can be mobilized for resistance and to work for change instead of reproduction, justification, and normalization.

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## CHAPTER 2

### WRITING WITH THE ALPHABET OF FEELING BAD

*Ann Cvetkovich*

A is for Anxiety and for Alienation.  
A is also for Acedia, a medieval word  
for the lethargy of spiritual despair.

B is for Backward, as in Feeling Backward.  
Or left out or like a misfit.  
Feeling Backward can also mean  
looking to the past to make connections  
with people from other times  
who might have been queer and  
who can become our fellow travelers.

C is for Capitalism, as in  
'You might be suffering from Capitalism.'  
But saying that capitalism is the problem  
doesn't always help me get up in the morning.

D is for Depression,  
for Despair, for Doubt, for Disappointment  
and for Dread.

E is for the Everyday  
because feeling bad is a very  
ordinary and Everyday experience.

F is for Failure,  
which is not always a bad thing  
since the Failure to be normal can be good.

F is also for Feeling Bad.  
The Alphabet of Feeling Bad is about creating new vocabularies  
but sometimes very simple statements like 'I feel bad'  
are the best way to describe our feelings.  
We don't always need new words.  
Sometimes we just need to acknowledge Feeling Bad.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> This excerpt is from *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad*, the full text of which was written for a video installation for the 'Words Needed' exhibit in Umeå, Sweden, in early 2014. A written version of the text was distributed as part of its installation in 'Counterparts',

## Behind the scenes

This is the opening of an abecediary that derives from my video collaboration with the Berlin-based artist Karin Michalski, the first version of which was produced for a group show called 'A Burnt-Out Case?' at nGbK gallery in Berlin in 2012 (see Fig. 1). Karin was interested in the work of the collectives with which I have been associated, Public Feelings and Feel Tank, including the concept of 'political depression', and I had previously worked with her on an interview for a zine she made called 'Feeling Bad—Queer Pleasures, Art & Politics'. For the present project—a collaboration that also included the artist Renate Lorenz—she proposed that I help her write an 'alphabet of feeling bad', an abecediary of key terms from 'A is for Anxiety' to 'Z is for Zest' that would extend the inquiry into the political depression and negative affect that had brought us together.

Although we did some initial brainstorming via email to generate words for each of the letters of the alphabet, the project was mostly finalized during a trip I made to Berlin for a one-day shoot in which I 'performed' the alphabet by reciting the list along with brief explanations of each of the terms. I did not fully realize until I got to the studio (where a queer version of Tracey Emin's *My Bed* was set up as my stage) that Karin wanted me to explain the words, not just recite them, and the resulting live/filmed performance is a combination of script and improvisation, which was filmed while I recited slightly different versions of the alphabet three times in one long take of 45 minutes! It was unexpectedly gruelling to make the jump from skeletal script to performance while the camera was running—if it had just been a live performance whose results were ephemeral, I would likely have been more relaxed.

As what Karin describes as an 'experimental interview', *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad* has been a good way to combine scholarship and art, not least because it carries my work and those of my fellow queer affect theorists into different venues—the gallery and the street rather than the university, and Europe rather than the US—and without my having to be present. The video has been screened as a continuous loop composed of two of the different versions, and it has now been shown in exhibitions in London (in 'Visualising Affect' at Lewisham Arthouse in conjunction with Goldsmiths College), Zurich (at Les Complices), Karlsruhe (at Badischer Kunstverein for an exhibition called 'An Unhappy Archive'), and other locations around Europe (see Fig. 2). I have been able to use it in some of my own presentations, starting with an abridged live performance for Allyson Mitchell and

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curated by the Institute for Contemporary Ideas and Arts, Gothenburg, Sweden, in the summer of 2014.

Deirdre Logue's 'Axe-Grinding workshop' at the Tate Modern in London, and as a point of departure for writing workshops in Sydney, Australia, and Sundsvall, Sweden. Thus far, however, Karin and I have only had one chance to co-present the film—at the conference 'Art Affects' in Freiburg, Germany.

I also collaborated with Karin on a second version of the abecediary for a video installation project called 'Words Needed' curated by Anna Linder in Umeå, Sweden, which was European Capital of Culture for 2014. For that version we turned the script into a text (white words on a black background) which was projected on a wall of snow in the middle of one of the city streets—right next to a shopping mall called Utopia!—as part of the festival's opening ceremonies (see Fig. 3.) This second version has also been exhibited in Gothenburg as part of 'Counterparts' (curated by Anna van der Vliet), an exhibition designed to transform public space during the Swedish general elections in the autumn of 2014. For that installation, the video was projected onto the ceiling of a hotel room, and spectators could lie on the bed to watch it, thus echoing the location of my own performance/interview and creating a more intimate public space for shared feelings (see Figs. 4 and 5).

The academic workshop in Sundsvall, which prompted the present volume, was fortuitous because it gave me a chance to visit the location of the 'Words Needed' installation in Umeå and to discuss it with people who had seen it. I incorporated the film into my workshop presentation in order to describe my interest in embodied theory and queer affect, and used it as provocation in a writing workshop that became another version of the alternative public spaces the film seeks to create. This essay presents some reflections on the various iterations of the project, which has been generative for my thinking despite the fact that I have not been able to see any of its formal exhibitions!

### **The abecediary as theory pedagogy**

The abecediary has been a way to create theory by performing it. And since the actual performance was impromptu and thus improvisatory, the results are less deliberate than many forms of writing, or even academic public performance, where the thinking is so often planned. It is also a way of teaching theory, and the genre of the abecediary enhances the use of the keyword, another pedagogical genre for theory. Theory often takes the form of vocabularies and conceptual terms that provide tools for thinking, whether the classic Marxist keywords, such as *base*, *superstructure*, and *structure of feeling*, as defined by Raymond Williams; terms to describe the shifting state of the political economy such as *postmodernism*, *late capitalism*, or *neoliberalism*; or, in the current moment of the affective turn, distinctions between *emotion* and *affect* (which have sometimes generated anxious



discussion) or the new significance attached to words such as *mood* and *atmosphere*. Keywords morph and change in significance, and new theories (and theorists) can be known by the vocabulary (or sometimes even buzzwords) they generate.

Disparaged as jargon by their detractors, theoretical terms often call out for definition. The abecediary is thus a way to bring people in—an adaptation of the children’s genre to make the technical language of theory accessible and to forge new public cultures. Karin also cites *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad*’s sources in abecedaries in classic videos from the experimental tradition such as John Baldessari’s *Teaching a Plant the Alphabet* (1972) and Martha Rosler’s *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975), which explored the arbitrary and oppressive process of language acquisition and the lesson as a form of negative pedagogy. Acknowledging this critique, our version explores the abecediary’s potential as an activist or grassroots educational form, seeking to craft a lecture or a lesson that can be transmitted to and absorbed by anyone (not just remaining in the hands of the experts). I write not only as an academic, but as someone whose knowledge of feeling bad comes from experience and who is creating a vocabulary that provides strategies for living. As part of the exhibition ‘An Unhappy Archive’ (a term used by Sara Ahmed in *The Promise of Happiness*) at the Badischer Kunstverein in Karlsruhe, *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad* screened alongside books by me, Ahmed, and other queer affect theorists such as José Muñoz, Lauren Berlant, and Heather Love, making even more explicit the film’s intellectual sources and enhancing its pedagogical and political functions.

In our rendering of the abecediary, theory’s keywords also become more accessible because they are offered up through forms of instruction that are attuned to affective modes of instruction (as indicated by the bed that replaces the classroom or lecture hall to offer a more intimate space of learning where feelings are encouraged). It was important for me that the list include not just the technical vocabulary associated with particular theorists, whether old guard or new queer theorists, but that it also endorse everyday language as a form of theoretical vocabulary. Some words are, of course, major theoretical concepts from fellow travellers in queer affect theory—Heather Love’s *Feeling Backward*, Lauren Berlant’s *Slow Death*, and Sara Ahmed’s *Killjoy* and her critical account of *Happiness*—but the explanations are brief enough to remain accessible and circulate in the public sphere without becoming a full-on lecture. But other words, such as *Vulnerability*, *Loneliness*, *Rage*, and, of course, *Feeling Bad*, are more ordinary or vernacular terms. The resulting list is thus quite varied—from high to low, from common to obscure. Indeed the process of finding words for each of the twenty-six letters of the English alphabet suggests that the vocabulary of feeling bad is infinite—that there are many ways to feel bad and many ways to describe feeling bad. And it also suggests

that negative feelings need to be named, and a way found to make that naming a public process. *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad* makes public both experience and its vocabulary that might be private or stigmatized—and suggests that there is no feeling too shameful or private—or inarticulate—not to be shared with others.

### **Keyword as magic portal**

In our public feelings work, we have used the term *portal* to describe the keyword—to indicate its associative powers and its capacity to open up to new ideas and new worlds or to facilitate a crossing from one world to another.<sup>13</sup> Used in the context of the Internet to describe the rapid transfer from one source of information to another, portal also has psychoanalytic connotations of an unconscious logic at work in defining the terms' meaning. I sometimes think of keywords as talismans or fetishes that have magic powers; we can get attached to our favourite theoretical terminology in the same way that a child learning the alphabet may fixate on a beloved word, especially when it is associated with an image, although usually the word is a proper name or noun, not an abstract concept.

Thus, when I reflect on the improvised nature of the original performance of *The Alphabet*, I can see my own predilections at work. There are, for example, some words, such as *Grief*, *Shame*, and *Trauma*, that are so obvious or so common to me (Cvetkovich 2003, 2012) that I do not offer much explanation for them; they belong to vast critical and theoretical bibliographies that I did not have the energy or patience to unpack in the moment of performance. So I say, for example, 'Grief—I don't think that needs an explanation.' In other cases, with terms such as *Vulnerability* and *Precarity* that have also drawn a lot of theoretical attention, I said a bit more because of my investment in vulnerability's centrality to social and political life. There is also a difference between the keywords that many theorists share, such as *Melancholy* or *Utopia*, and ones that are identified with particular people. I did my best with concepts such as *Slow Death* or *Killjoy*, but felt myself pausing slightly to ventriloquize Lauren Berlant and Sara Ahmed, not quite certain what it meant to take on their vocabulary without acknowledging them by name, but also wanting to declare a shared sensibility. (And *The Alphabet* is also a way of signalling their relevance for a public discussion of feeling bad.)

Some terms were also more personal. *Dread*, one of my favourite affect words from George Eliot; *Melodrama*, in recognition of my work on nineteenth-century popular genres (Cvetkovich, 1992); *Numbness*, always a point of reference for me in

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<sup>13</sup> My thanks to Randy Lewis, my 'Public Feelings' colleague at the University of Texas, for providing this term.

thinking about affect as force or energy (Cvetkovich, 2012): my favourite moments are the ones where the keywords are a way of encoding my own intellectual and affective histories. For example, the words *Yell/Yawn* and *Zest* (which I linked with vitality) come from my experience with co-counselling (also known as re-evaluation counselling), which prioritizes the physical discharge of feelings; their inclusion represents my secret nod to other ways of sharing bad feelings besides talking about them as I do in the video. And Karin requested that we include the word *Jealousy*, and I liked our invocation of the challenges of the feminist collective process by defining it as ‘political disappointment, the failure of feminist dreams of sisterhood.’ These are not universal definitions, but ones that suggest particular experiences and collectives. They are not meant to be binding for others, but instead serve as an invitation to create other vocabularies or to define terms in other ways so that everyone can have their own alphabet of feeling bad.

### **Feeling bad as negative affect**

Uniting the list and central to all of the terms is the interest in ‘negative affects’ indicated by the rubric of *feeling bad*, which in English at least is a colloquial term whose meaning derives in part from its lack of precision. *Bad* is close to *sad* but not quite the same, and it also carries the hint of *bad* as wrong, as though *feeling bad* is a sign of deviance or non-normativity. *Feeling bad* is also ambiguous with respect to distinctions between the physical and the psychic, since saying ‘I feel bad’ can apply to either, and can mean that one feels sick in a way that cannot be diagnosed or pinned down. This lack of specificity feels transgressive with respect to both scholarship, which depends on precision, and good writing, where the vague and the colloquial are to be avoided.

As something one cannot quite name, *feeling bad* also conveys the increasingly important sense of affect as mood, atmosphere, or sensibility. Karin’s adoption of *feeling bad* as a category was an important affirmation of my own enduring desire for a category that is more capacious than technical or historical terms with complex genealogies such as *melancholy* or *depression*.<sup>14</sup> *Feeling bad* is the vernacular counterpart to *negative affect*, which has become ubiquitous of late in discussions of queer affect and which, even as it seeks to challenge norms, has far more legitimacy and respectability as a theoretical concept. And even as the abecediary proliferates specific terms for feeling bad, the generic term remains central.

When I went back over my own transcript to compose the written version, I was also struck by how often I had repeated the words ‘making room for’ or ‘making space for’ various versions of feeling bad. These phrases indicate our desire to

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<sup>14</sup> Heather Love (2010) also discusses ‘feeling bad’ in her essay ‘Feeling Bad in 1963’.

create conceptual space for those feelings and their terminology. But the process whereby *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad* 'makes room' for feeling is also quite literal, since the video's installations expand what counts as public space, as did the bedroom setting, which is a reminder that the theorist has a body and is not just a talking head.

### **An abecediary as a writing workshop**

The two versions of *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad* have been screened in contexts that strain against conventional gallery exhibitions, which seems appropriate for work that straddles the boundaries between art and academe and between theory and vernacular. As such, it has also proved an interesting teaching tool, and I have experimented with different ways of incorporating it into talks not only to showcase the project, but also to demonstrate the popularization of theoretical work on queer and negative affect. I have been especially happy to use the video screenings as a vehicle for writing workshops, inspired by the work I have been doing in Public Feelings groups, writing with others in order to generate new theories, concepts, images, and short forms. Using *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad* as a point of departure not only builds on the conceptual work of the abecediary and keywords, but also uses theory as a vehicle for a writing practice that stresses thinking as activity or performance (as it was for me in the process of filming the first version).

The Mid Sweden University project 'Normalization and the Neoliberal Welfare State' was an ideal venue for a Public Feelings writing workshop, since many of the participants had already experimented with alternative research practices (as evident in Griffin et al. 2013), and the abecediary was appropriate given that some members of the group specialize in children's literature, which was the focus on one of the sessions. My goal for the writing workshop was to get the group to generate its own set of keywords as prompts for writing. Thus after screening *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad*, I asked that everyone make two lists of keywords: one a more 'public list' of words that were important at the workshop, the other a more 'private list' of words that had personal meaning, whether in relation to their own research project or to their lives more generally. I sometimes begin workshops by asking the participants to describe how they feel, and I then incorporate the responses into the writing and discussion. In Sundsvall, practices of 'processing' were already on the table courtesy of the presentation by Maria Jönsson and Anna Rådström on feeling like a fraud and consciousness-raising, which was compatible with my own use of writing practice as 'working through' or affective labour.

Everyone then shared one of their words along with a brief explanation. The cumulative force of the collective discussions usually comes through in this

process, and in Sundsvall this was certainly the case. As with *The Alphabet* itself, the words ran the gamut from theoretical to personal, and from shared to idiosyncratic (see Fig. 6). Many, of course, reflected feelings: *e-motions*, *dis/trust*, *ambivalence*, *dis/comfort*, *daring*, *invisibility*. Others reflected our discussions of affect theory and *The Alphabet*: *reparative*, *internalized dominance*, *artist-theorist*, *finding words*. And some, such as *pink rebellion* and *soul-shrinking*, seemed very particular: portals into other projects. Especially important to me were the Swedish words—*sinnesrörelse* and *våga(d)*—since I had encouraged people to suggest Swedish terms so as not to take for granted English as the language of our conversation. Indeed, keywords are very adaptable to bilingual contexts and for discussions of translation. Although the workshop was conducted in English and most participants were fluent in the language, it is also valuable to be attuned to what does not translate well (including words such as *affect* and *emotion*), and it was useful for me to learn about the Swedish terms that came up.

Once the words have been shared, I like to have everyone write about one of them together. Sharing words is a version of the transfer of affect, where you feel someone else's feeling or, in this case, their vocabulary of feeling. Depending on how much time is available, people can choose a word on their own, or the group can arrive at a consensus. I have experimented with different systems, including voting, although the keyword that gets the most votes is not necessarily the only one to use. If there is time, working with the outliers can be another way of tapping collective feelings, including negative ones that might be lurking on the edges.

Working in this way not only generates new keywords, but also allows theoretical terms or conceptual categories to be connected to the specific stories people tell about them. One aim of the workshop format is to use the activity of writing to generate stories rather than definitions—to let the word prompt other words and images rather than arrive at a single definition. Ultimately, then, *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad* is not about teaching definitions, but about opening up keywords (and affects) to more personal vocabularies and definitions that can be shared, and about making feelings less lonely and isolating. A writing workshop is also a way to spur on new thinking in the company of others, where seemingly stray or idiosyncratic thoughts and feelings can become the raw material for research projects.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> I would like to thank Karin Michalski for inviting me to collaborate with her on *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad*. Her creative work has allowed me to see my own thinking and writing in new ways. I am also grateful to Eva Söderberg and the other members of the Mid

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Sweden University research group for the opportunity to present the 'Public Feelings writing' workshop that led to this essay.

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#### Captions for Images

**FIGURE 1 Production still from *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad* (version 1), 2012. Photograph by Robert Mleczko.**

**FIGURE 2 *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad* (version 1) for 'An Unhappy Archive', Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, Germany, 2014. Photograph by Stephan Baumann.**

**FIGURE 3 *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad* (version 2) for 'Words Needed', Umeå, Sweden, 2014. Photograph by Karin Michalski.**

**FIGURE 4 *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad* (version 2) for 'Counterparts', Gothenburg, Sweden, 2014. Photograph by Kjell Caminha.**

**FIGURE 5 *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad* (version 2) for 'Counterparts', Gothenburg, Sweden, 2014. Photograph by Mary Coble.**

**FIGURE 6 Keywords from the Public Feelings writing workshop, Sundsvall, Sweden, 2014. Photograph by Eva Söderberg.**



FIGURE 1 Production still from *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad* (version 1), 2012. Photograph by Robert Mleczko.



FIGURE 2 *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad* (version 1) for 'An Unhappy Archive', Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, Germany, 2014. Photograph by Stephan Baumann.





FIGURE 3 *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad* (version 2) for 'Words Needed', Umeå, Sweden, 2014. Photograph by Karin Michalski.



FIGURE 4 *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad (version 2)* for 'Counterparts', Gothenburg, Sweden, 2014. Photograph by Kjell Caminha.

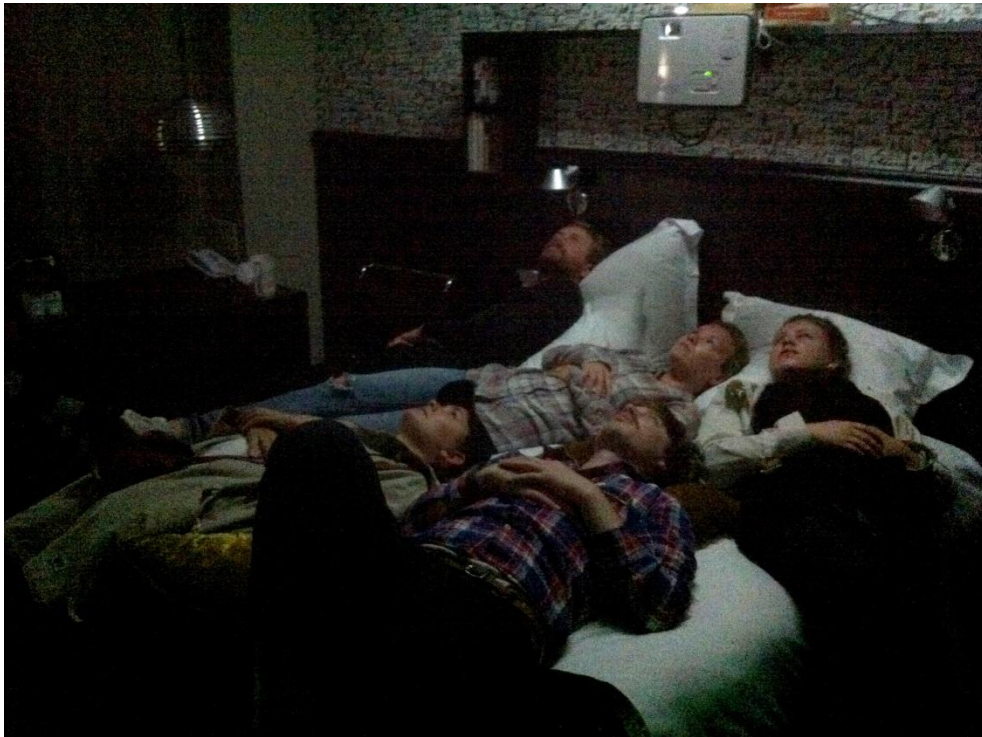


FIGURE 5 *The Alphabet of Feeling Bad* (version 2) for 'Counterparts', Gothenburg, Sweden, 2014. Photograph by Mary Coble.

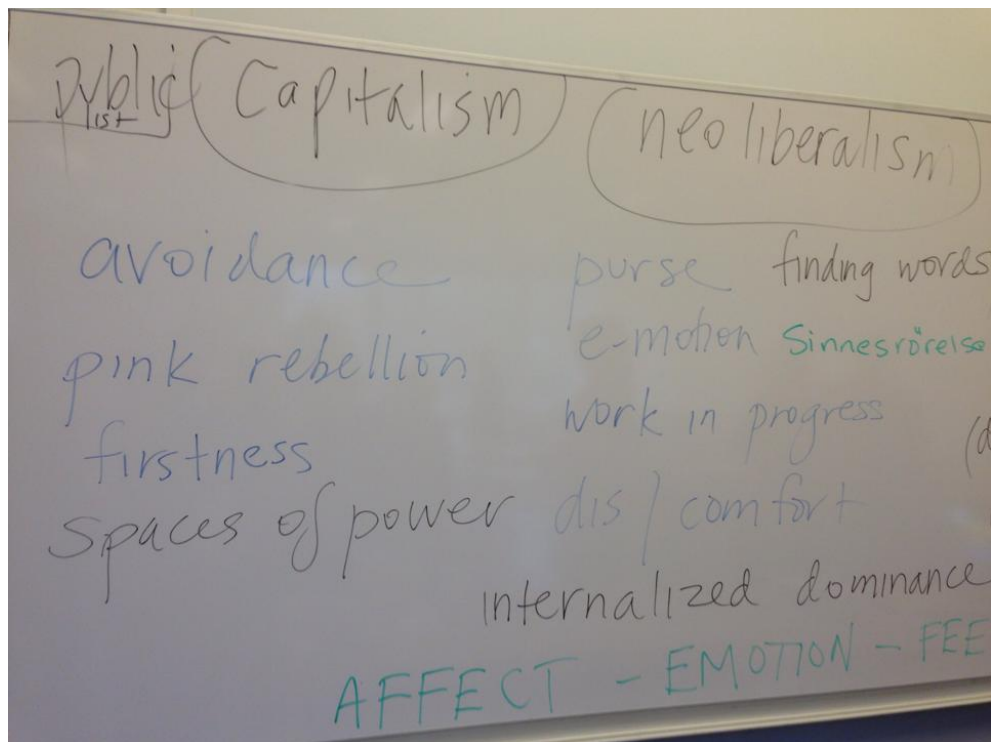


FIGURE 6 Keywords from the Public Feelings writing workshop, Sundsvall, Sweden, 2014. Photograph by Eva Söderberg.





## CHAPTER 3

### A REGIME OF FEAR? EMOTION, GENDER, AND MIGRATION IN THE AGE OF NEO-LIBERALISM

*Gabriele Griffin*

One of the issues that has provoked strong emotions in the public sphere in many north-western countries in Europe, including in Sweden, is that of migration (see Pred 2000). These expressions of emotion have taken quite specific forms, involving at one end of the spectrum the evocation of empathy with and sympathy for those displaced in appeals to support humanitarian aid (see Höijer 2004; Fassin 2012) and, on the other, and much more problematically, articulations of fear and hatred of those ‘others’ who appear on Western shores, quite literally.<sup>16</sup> In this essay, I want to examine that articulation of fear as it occurs in popular culture, and in particular, for the Swedish context, in two works by Henning Mankell, a writer more commonly cited in connection with crime fiction than in the context of migration or neo-liberal politics (see, for example, Bergman 2010; Agger 2011; Nestingen & Arvas 2011; Forshaw et al. 2012; Geherin 2012; Nestingen 2012).<sup>17</sup> Utilizing the theoretical writings of Arjun Appadurai (2006; 2009), I shall argue that Mankell’s work speaks in interesting and partly contradictory ways to the regimes of fear that govern contemporary popular cultural renditions of the issue of migration.

What’s behind this whole thing? Neo-Nazis? Racists with connections all over Europe? Why would someone commit a crime like this anyway? Jump out into the road and shoot a complete stranger? Just because he happened to be black? (Mankell 2011 [1991], 232)

These are the words of Kurt Wallander, middle-aged male police inspector and one of the heroes of the post-2000 expansion of Scandinavian crime fiction (Saarinen 2003; Nestingen and Arvas 2011; Forshaw 2012; Nestingen 2012). His colleague responds: ‘No way of knowing,’ said Rydberg. ‘But it’s something we’re going to

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<sup>16</sup> There is an extensive literature on so-called ‘boat people’ going back to the 1970s, including Grant (1979), Tsamenyi (1983), Caplan et al. (1989), Marr et al. (2003), Pugh (2000), Pugh (2004), O’Doherty and Lecouteur (2007), Lewa (2008), Andersson (2012), and Phillips (2013). One of the most recent manifestations of this phenomenon in Europe is the arrival of ‘boat people’ from Africa and the Middle East in Sicily and Italy more generally (see Carta et al. 2014).

<sup>17</sup> See Žizek (n.d.) for a slightly different take.

have to learn to live with' (Mankell 2011, 232). By 2014, the assumption that one has to learn to live with such violence, the violence of everyday racism, has, one might argue, become the 'new normal'. Racism in Scandinavia—in its many forms, and always with the threat of shadowy networks of neo-Nazis and fascists reaching across Europe in the background—has become 'everyday' (Essed 1991). Anders Breivik's mass murders in 2011 were but the last, highly publicized instance of this. At the end of *Faceless Killers*, Wallander muses: 'Again he thought about the violence. The new era, which demanded a different kind of policeman. We're living in the age of the noose, he thought. Fear will be on the rise' (298). One question we may ask is what kind of fear we are talking about and whose fear exactly is 'on the rise'.

When I first came to Sweden for an extended period of time, in the winter of 2008, I knew nothing of the Wallander series and I had no sense at all of 'fear being on the rise', of any culture of violence or racism.<sup>18</sup> I remember that I was quite taken aback to discover, in the free local newspaper delivered through my letter box every week, a column entitled 'Polisreporten' which detailed all the crimes that had occurred in the previous week in the very well-to-do quarter of town, Östermalm, where I had been put up by the university.<sup>19</sup> I had always imagined Sweden a very safe place, and actually, in 2014 I still think of it as such. What really struck me about Stockholm in 2008, however, was how white it was—rather like some of the covers of Vintage's English editions of Mankell's novels. These tend to be black and white (a particularly apposite visual trope for certain kinds of crime fiction that cast the world metaphorically in black and white) and often feature a deserted landscape with just one house or a city in the distance.<sup>20</sup> The whiteness of those covers mirrored in some way the whiteness I experienced in Stockholm in 2008, which was not just a function of the snow that fell. It was also a function of the fact that all the people I routinely saw were white—there seemed to be very few people (immigrants or non-immigrants) of any colour other than white. Coming from the UK this was particularly noticeable, since especially in the cities in which I had lived—London, Leeds, Leicester—multiculturalism visibly prevailed.<sup>21</sup> The street scene in Stockholm was quite different, certainly in the quarters I frequented the

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<sup>18</sup> As someone who does not routinely read crime fiction, I first became aware of Mankell's work through the television series *Wallander*, which first appeared in Britain in 2008 (see Tapper 2009; Peacock 2011; Waade 2011).

<sup>19</sup> I was Visiting Professor in Gender Studies at Stockholm University at the time.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, <http://www.vintage-books.co.uk/books/0099532042/henning-mankell/the-man-from-beijing/>, accessed 26 August 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Leicester in the UK is the first city where the majority population is migrant or descendents of migrants (see Panesar 2005).

most, which appeared to be largely monoethnic, something that is not the case today, just six years later.

What also struck me in 2008 were the multiple exhibitions around Stockholm testifying to the horrors of mass killings and deaths elsewhere, outside of Sweden: an installation by Lars Lerin at Waldemarsudde, commemorating the Tsunami, reminiscent in its use of shoes washed up on the shores of Indonesia of another memorial articulated through shoes, that of Hungarian Jews in Budapest;<sup>22</sup> works by Christian Boltanski at Magasin 3, memorializing the Holocaust.<sup>23</sup> In all these exhibits, it was not the faceless killers that one confronted, but the faceless victims. Whiteness, and the cultural construction of the faceless victim—these seemed dominant. But they were also, importantly, accounts of what had happened elsewhere, rather than on Swedish soil. Mankell's work returns these issues to Sweden, diagnosing, as Allan Pred (2000) has put it, that 'even in Sweden', 'racisms are currently flourishing' (2000, 6).

Facelessness has been much debated in post-2000 academe, partly in response to Judith Butler's discussions (2004, 2009) of the rendering faceless of certain groups of people in the context of what she described as 'grievable lives', and partly in response to the media rhetoric of plurification, of 'floods' and 'masses', which had come to dominate some European and certainly British public discourses about immigration (Charteris-Black 2006). Here facelessness and sheer numbers, expressed through metaphors of quasi-natural disasters, were mobilized as a measure to dehumanize immigrants and to reinforce arguments about the limits of welfare state resources. They represented the uncountable, the de-individualized, the masses that defy number and hence produce indifference. In his 2001 novel *The Shadow Girls*, Mankell attempts to address this facelessness. In the novel a Swedish reporter arrives at a Spanish refugee camp to write, as he says, 'a series on people without faces, refugees who are desperately trying to enter Europe. We want to tell your story. We want to give you back your face' (17). 'Tea-Bag', the female refugee he announces this to and one of the main protagonists, is outraged by his suggestion, and claims her agency by demanding an apology, stating: 'I already have a face. What is he taking pictures of if I have no face?' (17) *She* is not faceless. 'I am here, Tea-Bag thought. I am in the centre of things here, in the centre of my life' (10). Tea-Bag's encounter with the journalist translates into an uneasy confrontation, repeated in various ways throughout the novel, that articulates gender disparity (man, 'first-world', rescues woman, 'third world') and between

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<sup>22</sup> See [http://www.greatsynagogue.hu/gallery\\_shoes.html](http://www.greatsynagogue.hu/gallery_shoes.html), accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>23</sup> See <http://www.magasin3.com/v1/sv/utstallningar/boltanski.html>, accessed 20 August 2014.



two people in different states of uncertainty, in particular uncertainty about the meaning of the other. It is that scenario, of uncertainty about the other, which fuels—at least partly—the hatred and xenophobia I address here.

Sarah Ahmed (2009), amongst others, has written about such uncertainties, especially in a piece on 'The Organization of Hate' where she discusses how hate is mobilized to generate 'a subject that is endangered by imagined others whose proximity threatens not only to take something away from the subject (jobs, security, wealth) but also to *take the place of the subject*' (252; my emphasis). This taking the place of the subject is what I want to discuss here. I shall use Arjun Appadurai's work on the 'Fear of Small Numbers' (2006, 2009) and the two novels by Henning Mankell to think about the question of regimes of fear as a technology of neo-liberalism. Mankell's novels, published ten years apart in 1991 and 2001, act as cultural barometers for the normalization of certain regimes of fear around immigration in the Swedish context, marked by a series of shifts in Swedish immigration policy (Rosenberg 1995; Eger 2010), and also in the socio-scape of Sweden, not least as it has appeared to me in my repeated and extended visits to the country since 2008. Things may have changed in Sweden in the past few years, but it remains far from certain how these changes might be engaged with.

The question of how social groups relate to one another underlies Appadurai's work on the 'fear of small numbers', where he seeks to account for the increasing numbers of large-scale ethno-nationalistically driven genocides that have occurred globally since the 1970s—in India, in Rwanda, in the former Yugoslavia, and so on. He argues that we live in an age of social uncertainty as the forces of globalization—specifically the transnational flows of capital, people, information—have begun to marginalize nation-states' abilities to control their borders, threatening their boundaries at every level. This results in an 'anxiety of incompleteness' as he puts it, which manifests itself in questions of identity that relate to the nation-state. As he puts it:

One kind of uncertainty is a direct reflection of census concerns: how many persons of this or that sort really exist in a given territory? Or, in the context of rapid migration or refugee movement, how many of 'them' are there among us? ... A further uncertainty is about whether a particular person really is what he or she claims or appears to be or has historically been. (2006, 5–6)

Appadurai's list of uncertainties is infinitely expandable, and, as he suggests, 'these various forms of uncertainty create intolerable anxiety' (6) that may ultimately translate into violence, which then becomes a technique for producing a hierarchized order of 'them' and 'us'.

The question of numbers in conjunction with a sense of social uncertainty ('how many of "them" are there among "us"?') looms large in the context of migration due the expansion of the immigrant population in Sweden as in other European countries from the 1960s onwards.<sup>24</sup> This expansion has led to increasingly restrictive legislation (Westin 2006). Göran Rosenberg suggests that from 1972, *labour* immigration to Sweden ceased as 'More or less overnight the Swedish political elite redefined the role of Sweden vis-à-vis its immigrants, from one of economic necessity to a moral duty' (1995, 211), with 'the word refugee [becoming] synonymous with immigration' and a shift in emphasis occurring from 'the needs of Sweden'—meaning its economic needs—to 'the needs of the refugees' (211). As Rosenberg states, 'Refugees did not immigrate for the sake of helping Sweden; Sweden existed to help the refugees' (211). This process led to the homogenization of immigrants and their redefinition as refugees and, in consequence, as economic burdens. Rosenberg blames the increasingly bureaucratized centralization of the immigration services that accompanied this, and what he describes as the political elite's refusal to reconcile 'political and moral commitments with economic realities', for the development of randomness in the processing of immigrants and, ultimately, 'increased insensitivity regarding individual refugees, i.e. ... throwing people out after two or three years of investigation, forcing thousands of refugees into hiding' (214). This precise issue is thematized in Mankell's *The Shadow Girls*, which features three young refugee women in various positions of (il)legality, lacking recognition by the state as citizens in the form of a clear legal status, and acting as figures that present the difficulties the Swedish state has in managing migration.

Both *Faceless Killers* and *Shadow Girls* articulate concern about the Swedish state as an ailing structure, incapable of using its institutions—the police, the immigration services—effectively to control the influx and settlement of migrants. Confronted with the brutal murder of an elderly couple which is initially attributed to refugees, Wallander thinks, 'I really hope that the killers are at that refugee camp. Then maybe it'll put an end to this arbitrary, lax policy that allows anyone at all, for any reason at all, to cross the border into Sweden' (2011, 46). The result of this failure is that 'The insecurity in this country is enormous. People are afraid' (227). It is a fear that calls for change: 'Maybe the times require another kind of policeman, [Wallander] thought ... Policemen who aren't distressed ... Policemen who don't suffer from my uncertainty and anguish' (19).

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<sup>24</sup> See the Swedish Migration Board data, <http://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Board/Statistics.html>, accessed 20 August 2014.

Well, on one level—and this articulates a dimension of the gender politics of this novel—Wallander’s ‘uncertainty and anguish’ is the anxiety of a certain, conventionally dominant masculinity, especially in its middle-aged version in crisis. In this, Wallander is no different from the writer Jesper Humlin, who is the central male character of *The Shadow Girls*. Both men are adrift; they feel embattled and hollowed out. They feel ambivalent and anxious about their work, have strained relations with any female partners and indeed with women more generally,<sup>25</sup> with an unreflecting sexual predatoriness that suggests their sense of entitlement, in this context to dominating women. They stand for a failing, male, cultural majority, but also, by extension, a failing state. The women elude their control, and in fact, in the context of the state, turn out to be *in control*. When Wallander rings the head of the Immigration Service, for example, he ‘was surprised to be speaking to a woman. He assumed that all senior government officials were still elderly gentlemen full of arrogant self-esteem’ (2011, 117). Ironically, Wallander fails to see himself in this image.

It is in this triangle of masculinity in crisis, ailing nation-states, and social uncertainty that Appadurai’s ‘Fear of Small Numbers’ (2009) becomes relevant. In it he raises the question of what he calls the formation of so-called predatory identities (236). He argues that the anxiety of incompleteness about their sovereignty can turn what he terms ‘majoritarian identities’ into predatory ones, where discourses of how the majority could itself become the minority ‘unless another minority disappears’ function as incentives to become predatory and so forestall the possibility of such reversals of fortune. In asking in particular under what conditions *liberal* majoritarianism becomes illiberal, Appadurai links emotion in the form of fear to the idea of number and the liberal imaginary. He suggests that liberals have a certain ambivalence about the legitimacy of collectives as political actors, since the critical number for liberal social theory is the number one, ‘the numerical sign for the individual’. The other important number is zero, as it converts the one into tens, hundreds, and thousands: ‘in other words, zero is the numerical key to the idea of the masses’ (239). However, according to Appadurai, the masses in liberal thought are associated with ‘large numbers that have lost the rationalities embedded in the individual, in the number one’ (240). They are viewed as the basis for both totalitarianism and fascism, and ‘it is because of this ... that much liberal thought has been rightly characterized by a fear of large numbers’ (240). One might argue that the presentation of immigrants, refugees,

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<sup>25</sup> Both characters struggle to have relations with women that are not derogatory and dismissive, or immediately sexualized. They are incapable of treating women as their equals.

and asylum seekers in terms of faceless masses, not least in the media which Appadurai also indicts, fuels that fear in the neo-liberal regimes in which we live.

Appadurai contrasts this liberal fear of large numbers with the fear of small numbers that is associated with 'oligarchies, elites and tyrannies' on the one hand and 'the specter of conspiracy' in the form of 'the cell, the spy, the traitor, the dissident, the revolutionary' on the other (240). Small numbers or minorities carry with them 'special interest' claims, and hence, especially as substantive, permanent minorities, they become problematic because of their rights claims. Appadurai argues that this has generated unease in Western democracies, where the struggle over cultural rights as they pertain to national citizenship has led to the emergence and reinforcement of predatory identities.

Appadurai suggests that the fear of small numbers is linked to the majority's fear of 'becoming *minor* (culturally or numerically)' (249). One might argue that these two fears—the fear of minorities with special interest claims and the fear of majorities of becoming minor—are powerfully and complexly interrelated. 'Fear *of*' may be understood in two different ways: as a genitive verb form, denoting belonging, the fear that someone has; and as the dative form, referencing the object of one's fear. The majority may be fearful and translate that into violence against the object of its fear, the minority. At the same time, the minority may be equally fearful of the majority—though not, of course, for the same reasons. Thus in August 2014, the race riots in Ferguson, Missouri, index both the majoritarian fear of minorities (affect articulating the assumption that young black men are likely to engage in criminal activity) and the latter's rights claims (young black men's right not to fear for their lives due to police brutality), as well as the minority's fear of being brutalized by the police.<sup>26</sup> Similar fears played a role in the riots in the suburbs of Stockholm in 2013 (Freeman 2013). The majority's fears that their status will be undermined by the claims of minority groups that might gain the upper hand—which one might describe as a fear of redistribution—is mirrored by the minority's fears of not being recognized, of misrecognition in Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth's terms (2003).

The issue of the fear of becoming a minority is strongly represented in Mankell's *Faceless Killers*, in which fears about being 'overrun' by uncontrolled immigration flows result in onslaughts on migrants, fuel right-wing extremism, and are used as an excuse to hype up media accounts of the threats that migrants present, not least

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<sup>26</sup> See Stanley (2014) for details.

in terms of taking the place of the subject.<sup>27</sup> But whereas in *Faceless Killers* Mankell—like Appadurai elsewhere—focuses mainly on the fear of the majority, in *Shadow Girls* he attempts to set against this the fear of the refugees, the minority, who—as illegals, and additionally and specifically as women who are the objects of the predatory and proprietorial identities of men both from their host country and from their own communities—are beset by fears that come in a series of guises: their fear of poverty and violence that prompts them to flee in the first place; their fear as invisible illegal immigrants of becoming visible, and hence vulnerable, not least to the authorities; their fear of men—their fathers, brothers, lovers, strangers. Visibility prompts accountability, and hence, as the novel would have it, ‘freedom—if it actually exists—is always threatened’ (286). Problematically, one might argue, in *Faceless Killers* the majoritarian fear is ultimately vindicated, since the killers turn out to be two Czech criminals, on the run from the police in their own country and from the Immigration Service in Sweden. Thus, whilst the crime is solved, it also serves to reinforce the notion of the criminal, particularly the vicious criminal, as foreigner, a notion confirmed by the actual, disproportionately high number of foreigners in Swedish prisons (Martens 1997; Hofer 2003), and by implication to reassert a notion of Swedish purity—after all, and thankfully, the nasty murderers were not Swedish. Here we see some of the possibly unintended ambivalence in Mankell’s work as it both queries and reasserts notions of ‘we’ and ‘them’.

By the time of *Shadow Girls* things had become more complicated. Mankell attempts to counter the fear of the masses, and the social uncertainty that Appadurai diagnoses as arising from the effects of globalization and migration, by giving ‘faces’—identities, histories, and stories—to the shadow or migrant girls. But the intradiegetic author Jesper Humblin also says at one point: ‘I don’t believe much of what people tell me, particularly not if they are young female refugees’ (191). As he wonders increasingly ‘which story really belonged to whom’ (195) since the girls’ stories are full of contradictions and fragments that seem to come from other stories, their unique tales turn into ‘everywoman’, or rather, ‘every-migrant-woman’ tales that return the girls to the masses rather than keeping them in the state of radical individuation that supposedly unique narratives demand. And, unsurprisingly, Humblin finds that, ‘Suddenly, as if in a vision, he imagined

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<sup>27</sup> In the British context in 2014, against the backdrop of arguments that migrants, especially from Eastern Europe, take ‘British people’s jobs’, it has been argued that a report on this matter ‘reveals little evidence foreign migrants put British workers out of jobs’ (Travis 2014). Nonetheless, such fears persist.

thousands of small boats across the world filled with refugees on their way to Sweden. Maybe this is the way it is, he thought. We are living in the time of the rowing boat' (206). This 'new normal' is a faceless one, where those who are rowing are metonymically supplanted by the boat, projecting the threat that the country will soon be swamped by immigrants who find it easy to enter illegally, and are then forced to lead lives of crime to survive, and who end up in a Dantesque hell, living in a parallel universe to the indigenous population. Since the majority is fearful of the minority, the notion of indistinct masses contributes to what I termed above 'the production of indifference', which governs people's ability *not* to see others but to relegate them to the shadows, and to make fear their dominant emotion on the basis of which they refuse interaction.

A more favourable reading would be to suggest that in *Shadow Girls*, Mankell attempts to show new ways of engaging with migrants, diverging significantly from Appadurai by portraying the regime of fear which governs the minoritized – the fear of persecution, the fear of eviction, the fear of invisibility. Mankell produces this counter-narrative through three different devices.

First, he asserts what we might term the 'indifference of difference'. By this I mean the implicit suggestion in Mankell's texts that perceived differences are not 'real' and need to be understood as the effects of affect and lack of knowledge. He does this, for example, by constructing both the indigenous person—Jesper Humlin—and the shadow girls as fearful. Fear, one might argue, unites them, or at least affords them parallel affective experiences. It lessens difference. But Jesper's fears are also revealed to him as non-existential (2013, 199–200), not about survival, but about certain kinds of vanity and the thought of potential injuries to his *amour propre*.

Mankell's second device for constructing a counter-narrative to the one of the dominance of majoritarian fears is the repeated assertion of the fear and terror of the refugees, the minoritized. At one point, Tea-Bag, for instance, describes her experience of fleeing as 'The most desperate fear can never be described or told in words. One can never quite say what it is like to run into the darkness with death and pain and denigration only a step behind. I remember nothing of my escape, only the incredible fear I felt' (272). And, as the text asserts: 'Why do people leave? Why do they pull up their roots and go? I suppose some people are chased away and forced to flee. Maybe it's war or hunger or fear—it's always fear' (307). Mankell, in other words, attempts to shift the perspective from the majoritarian perspective on fear to the minoritarian one.

The third device Mankell utilizes is the production of the girls' stories. The actual telling of their stories, in the first person and set apart from the rest of the text by being in italics, is designed to give back to the 'faceless' their face, to construct them less as victims than as survivors who have a history that they inhabit. The aim is to de-objectify them, to counter the narrative of their object status. However, one might also argue that the effect is to set them apart on more than just the page. The refugee girls' object status depends partly on seeing the women as victims, without resources, helpless. At one point, for example, Humlin is told: 'In this country immigrants are still treated like victims. Because of their circumstances, their poor language skills, for almost any other reason' (86). This in a sense reproduces Rosenberg's line, discussed earlier, about the shift of perspectives on migrants in Sweden from regarding them as contributors to the economy to seeing them as in need of assistance. However, the text again and again emphasizes the refugee girls' resourcefulness, their ability to understand context and operate effectively within it. Indeed, Mankell suggests, 'most of them simply want to be treated like normal people' (86). The question that is not asked, however, is what kind of normal is envisaged here—who are these 'normal' people? Are they the 'new Swedes', as immigrants are explicitly referred to in the novel at one point (44), or the old Sweden that Mankell's middle-aged men recognize as having vanished and that seems to be as much a manufacture of popular culture—in particular, film and television—as the 'new Sweden'?

These are, in a sense, hard questions, not least because Mankell genders them in *Shadow Girls* but also, to an extent, in *Faceless Killers*. The old Sweden is represented by middle-aged men, fearful, paternalistic, intent upon preserving a certain status quo which nevertheless is escaping them and rendering them fearful. The new Sweden is a Sweden of female victims or survivors, of women who govern and who, as does the minister in *Shadow Girls*, provide refuge for (illegal) migrants. Mankell decides to construct his story in a bifurcated world where men represent a certain old order and women a certain new one.

At the same time, Mankell challenges neo-liberalism's insistence on the number one, the 'I', as its key figure. The survival of that 'I' as an individual human being depends upon its social reception, on the manufacture of a culturally acceptable self, of a narrative that will have social resonance and recognition. The refugees' manufacture of different versions of themselves in their effort to be accepted as refugees in a safe country is emblematic of this. The problematic of this manoeuvre, however, is that it generates social uncertainty as to the veracity of the narratives. As Humlin's publisher says to him at one point when discussing Humlin's idea to tell the refugee girls' stories, 'They'll never tell you the truth' (76). The question *Shadow Girls* itself begins to raise is that of what truth is expected.

When Tea-Bag begins to tell Humlin her story, his response is, 'There was something so unbelievable about her narrative that Humlin started to think it was probably true' (139).

Believability is here measured in terms of factual specificities, plausibility, the sense of the persuasiveness of an individual's tale. Humlin tells Tea-Bag at one point, 'I promise to listen, but I want to hear the truth. Nothing less. I am tired of this never knowing who you really are' (159). But beneath the factual truth that Humlin hunts as if it was the guarantor of certainty lies another truth, the truth of need. When Humlin says, 'I'm just trying to understand why you go by so many names' to one of the refugee girls, she retorts 'How are you supposed to make it in this world if you aren't prepared to sacrifice something like a name?' (182). The truth of the need that informs this question initially lies undetected—or detected and rejected—beneath the manufacture of the refugees' narratives. This is where one finds the tension between the ability to engage with the few as 'ones', as individuals, but not to be overwhelmed by the many. And, in a sense, neither Appadurai nor Mankell offer an answer to this. In neither case is the nation-state seen as capable of responding to these needs, nor are its citizens. The state in that sense has become bankrupt. At the end of *Shadow Girls* the situation of the girls is unchanged. As one of them says, 'I came to this country to tell my story and now I've done that. No one listened' (325). The question raised by this statement is what would it mean 'to listen'? What would it mean to hear this narrative? This is the question that we are left with; the question that, I would suggest, moves us beyond neo-liberalism. Mankell's narratives make it clear that individuals are also social constructs, the motivators and effects of social interactions, who simultaneously embody individuals and are parts of groups, swayed both by certain forms of logic as much as by emotions.



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# **Privilege and emotion**



## CHAPTER 4

### THE POLITICS OF MEN'S EMOTIONS: FROM EMOTIONAL DETACHMENT TO COMPASSION IN MEN'S RESPONSES TO GENDER INJUSTICE

*Bob Pease*

Critical masculinity studies and profeminist masculinity politics have neglected the role of emotions in men's lives.<sup>28</sup> In part this is because most of the populist writing about men has focused on men's emotional inexpressiveness and restricted emotionality as a key arena of change for men. This has taken the form of what Connell (2000) calls 'masculinity therapy', whereby men are encouraged to overcome their emotional illiteracy and face their vulnerabilities to achieve higher levels of intimacy with women, children, and other men. The implications of this form of masculinity politics was often to ignore male privilege and men's social dominance, and to portray men's difficulty in expressing emotions as a form of victimhood that created physical and mental health problems for men.

Profeminist masculinity studies have also been quite critical of the association of emotions with men's violence because it provided an excuse for men to deny responsibility and accountability for their violence. However, profeminist activists and critical masculinity theorists have often failed to grasp the functions of men's emotionality for perpetrating violence and maintaining unequal gender relations. In this essay, my aim is to interrogate men's emotional investment in male supremacy and violence, and to explore pedagogical strategies that use emotions to challenge men's resistance to acknowledging and addressing male privilege and abusive practices.

#### **Emotions and critical masculinity theory**

What is of particular significance for my purpose here is the recognition by sociologists of emotions that emotions are reflective of macro-societal processes as well as individual psychology (Berezin 2002). They provide an important connection between the psyche and an individual's subjectivity to the wider social order. Hence, I reject the biological and organismic view of emotions, which

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ignores cultural and social context, in favour of a socially constructed view of emotions (Galasinski 2004) that locates them within structured inequalities of power.

The literature on the sociology of emotions also challenges the dominance of the disembodied, Western, male mode of scholarship (Williams 1998). The contrast between rationality and emotion is seen to be part of the Western male intellectual tradition of scholarship. The masculine Western subject is associated with thought and reason, whereas emotions are associated with femininity (Ahmed 2004). Male academics are thus more likely to study the international political economy than emotions or people's personal lives (Duncomb and Marsden 1993).

As a critical masculinity theorist, I am interested in the how emotional labour can either reproduce or challenge dominant forms of masculinity (Robinson & Hockay 2011). I am interested in exploring how men's emotions are involved in the reproduction of male privilege and power, and also how they can be used motivate men to interrogate their privilege. Emotions are a site of political resistance to oppression and privilege. Consequently, they have a relationship to social justice, and they have a key role to play in transforming gender relations.

### **Revisiting men's emotional inexpressiveness**

There has been a considerable body of writing in masculinity studies on emotions and intimacy. Many masculinity scholars have written about men's issues of emotional suppression and emotional conflict (Balswick 1982; McGill 1985; Rowan 1997; Brooks 1998; Middleton 1992; Rutherford 1992; Seidler 1997). Most of the literature on masculinity that is concerned with the men's movement or personal change in men emphasizes men's emotional inexpressiveness. Men are said to be out of touch with their feelings and that they need to express more emotions to allow themselves to be vulnerable.

The language used to describe men's limited emotionality is that of 'the inexpressive male' and 'restrictive emotionality'. Balswick (1982) says that 'male inexpressiveness' can be categorized on the basis of at least three criteria: (i) whether or not feelings are evinced by the man; (ii) whether or not there is an attempt to express feelings; and (iii) whether the potential object of expression is a woman or a man. An expressive man is one who has feelings, and is able to recognize them and verbally express these feelings to both women and men. Steiner (1986) refers to this capacity to understand and deal with emotions as emotional literacy.

Various empirical studies have demonstrated that men report both less positive emotions such as affection, love, and joy and less negative emotions such as fear (McGill 1985; Duncomb & Marsden 1993; Brody 1999; Galasinski 2004; Hanlon 2009). Men's difficulty in expressing emotions is seen to have a number of personal and social consequences for men's intimacy with women, for men's capacity for nurturant fathering, for men's friendships with other men, and for men themselves (Pease 2002a).

Many women have expressed dissatisfaction with their intimate relationships with men. Hite's survey of 4,500 women reported that 98 per cent of them said that the biggest problem in their current relations was a lack of emotional closeness. The most commonly expressed complaint (77 per cent) was that 'he doesn't listen' (Hite 1987). A constant request from heterosexual women is for men to express themselves more than they do. Most men have been challenged for not giving enough of themselves in their relationships. Seidler (1991; 1994; 1997) has written extensively about men's emotional dependence on women, and men's inability to comprehend the emotional work involved in maintaining intimate relationships.

Much attention is also given in this literature to the toll that emotional inexpressiveness has on men. Men's physical health is placed at risk because men are unable to recognize the physical cues to illness and disease (Coyle and Morgan-Sykes 1998). Balswick (1982) believes this inability to express emotions has negative consequences for men because it robs them of potentially rich emotional experiences.

Men's interest in emotionality came into the foreground because of the importance placed on focusing on the personal in men's lives. Men's emotional illiteracy was seen by Rutherford (1992) to represent a silence in the construction of masculinity, whereby men were unable to develop a language or a knowledge of emotions. Men were thus encouraged to search inwards to find that which was lost, or to engage in what Middleton (1992) refers to as 'the inward gaze'.

In this view, men are lonely and isolated from close emotional attachments. After years of devaluing and denying their feelings, they are said to end up being unable to feel anything (Seidler 1991). Some writers have argued that this approach to men's emotions pathologized men even to the point of referring to men as having a form of male alexithymia (Walton 2007), a diagnostic term used to describe people who have difficulty expressing and talking about their feelings (Tenhouten 2007).

Some men report that they do have feelings but they choose not to disclose them (Duncomb & Marsden 1993). While it is seen to be important to be able to express



one's emotions, the ability to manage one's emotions is also held to be crucial (Robinson & Hockay 2011). Men, in particular, are under pressure to repress any emotions that might make them vulnerable. Middleton (1992) argues that men need to deny their emotions so that other men will not take advantage of them. Walton et al. (2004, 413) express it this way: 'To experience emotions is human; to control their expression is masculine'. Thus, men's behaviour in relation to their emotions is shaped by the gendered expectation that to express certain emotions is unmanly.

Lack of emotional fulfilment in men's lives is often cited by writers on masculinity as the reason for men to change. Thus, changing men's emotional lives became a focus of concern in some forms of masculinity politics, particularly within the men's liberation movement of the 1970s and 1980s, where men were often portrayed as victims at more of a disadvantage than women because of gender roles (Walton 2007). Such a view of men's emotions, however, ignores the gendered power inequalities in which emotions are produced.

This focus on men's emotional inexpressiveness and emotional incapacities was seen by some feminist critics as being too self-indulgent and letting men off the hook. Robinson (1996, 231) is suspicious of talking about men's emotional change towards being a new man as 'softening the face of patriarchy'. It was said that men can use talk about their wounded male psyche as a distraction from analysing men's privilege and power (Robinson & Hockay 2011.) As McLean (1996, 82) says, 'there is nothing quite so off-putting as listening to someone moan about how hard it is to be privileged'.

One of the problems with much of this literature is that it ignores the impact of gendered power relations. Men involved in personal healing groups and men's therapy tend to foreground men's emotions in ways that neglect the political dimensions of gender relations (White & Peretz 2010). My interest here is how men's emotional expression or inexpression is related to the reproduction of men's patriarchal privilege.

Many women have reported that they experience men's emotional distance as a form of gendered power, whereby men choose to withhold emotions and intimacy as a way of exerting control over women (Robinson 1996). Many men fear that if they are seen to be too emotional, it will undermine their superiority over women because it challenges the hegemonic expectation of male rationality and strength (Coyle & Morgan-Sykes 1998). Some men even talk about loving and intimate behaviour as being feminine (Pease 2002a).

Sattell (1989) argues that the male inexpressiveness theorists misunderstand the origins of men's emotional illiteracy. Their focus on men's inexpressiveness as a tragedy does nothing to challenge the social forces that construct this phenomena. For Sattell (1989), men's inexpressiveness is a prerequisite for preparing men for their positions of power and privilege. This is because it enables men who wield power to reduce their emotional involvement in the consequences of their practices. It is important for those who make decisions that will impact on the lives of others to close their eyes to the pain they have caused. So, in this view, men's inexpressiveness is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. It is part of men's capacity to control others, and it assists men in maintaining their power and privileges. Thus, when men fail to develop and express their feelings, they are more able to oppress others. Men's emotional indifference allows them to inflict pain on others without having any consequences (McLean 1996). Thus, we must explore the male privilege that resides behind men's emotional inexpressiveness.

While men's pain associated with distorted emotions is real, they are not simply victims of restricted gender roles. Rather, they repress their feelings because they do not want to be vulnerable to others. Men's abuse of power requires them to be desensitized to their emotions. This enables them to perpetuate gender inequalities and abusive practices. Emotional brutality such as this thus plays a very important function in the reproduction of gendered power structures (McLean 1990). McLean (1996) points out that military training exemplifies this kind of masculine socialization, with soldiers encouraged to dehumanize and demonize the enemy. In military training, soldiers are socialized to cut off their emotions to enable them to kill on demand (Donovan 2007).

### **The role of emotions in reproducing gender inequality**

One of the problems with the vast literature on emotional literacy and emotional intelligence is that it does not address the relationship between emotional behaviour and classed, gendered, and racialized positioning (Boler 1999). Drawing upon Foucault, Burkitt (2002) considers the relationship between power and emotions, and emphasizes the importance of studying the emotional dynamics of the exercise of power. He believes that emotions are connected to the status and power of particular groups who are divided by class, gender, race and other social divisions.

One's position in the social structure, then, is likely to have a significant impact on emotions. Those in positions of privilege who have the deference of others are likely to experience positive emotions associated with such compliance; those who have to accommodate to the power of others are more likely to experience negative emotions (Turner & Stets 2005). It is known that people's location in the social

structure impacts on their emotional modes of being. The more powerless they are, the greater the likelihood of having unpleasant emotional experiences and the greater the limitations in being able to manage emotions (Williams 1998). Skeggs (1997), for example, identifies the increased levels of emotional distress experienced by men and women in the working class as they deal with the insecurities of life.

This approach suggests that power inequalities between men and women are likely to be related to the different emotions they experience. Brody (1999) points out that men and women have different emotional connections to power. Whereas women experience power through a sense of accomplishment, men are more likely to experience power through the control and domination of other people. She suggests that men's derogatory treatment of women may be related to their emotional need to enhance their own self-esteem. Men's sense of entitlement in relation to women is thus premised on the view that men are superior and that they deserve more power and status. Brody (1999) relates the gendered division of emotional expression to gender roles, whereby women's caretaking role requires them to express warmth and vulnerability, but men's provider role requires aggression and pride and a decreased expression of warmth and vulnerability.

People have strong feelings about ideological beliefs. White and Peretez (2010) argue that our feelings about our beliefs underlie our identity. The very perception of justice or injustice elicits powerful emotions (Zembylas & Chubback 2009). Hence, our emotional relationship to dominant social norms and exploitative social practices perpetuates those norms and practices. Boler (1999) explores how people invest in particular social structures to the point where any challenge to them is experienced as a personal threat to their very existence. Consequently, when we challenge social injustice, we also subvert our emotional attachment to those injustices (Zembylas & Chubback 2009). However, if emotions are involved in the reproduction of structural inequalities, they can also play a part in their transformation (Turner & Stets 2005).

### **The role of emotions in challenging oppression and privilege**

Affective and reactive emotions are clearly involved in various forms of political protest and social action. People's emotions are related to what they perceive to be the cause of the injustice they are addressing (Jasper 1998). Emotions have been used by marginalized and oppressed groups to resist injustice (Boler 1999). Ahmed (2004) reminds us that tuning into our emotions can heighten awareness of the material conditions of subordination. Thus, emotions have been very important in the politicization of oppressed people. In part, this is because they are connected to the politics of pain and suffering.

A key emotion in oppositional politics from below is, of course, anger (Holmes 2004). As people tune into their experiences of injustice, they often find their voice through anger. Anger also conveys the message that there has been some form of injustice committed (Lyman 2004). Anger has thus been important for marginalized groups to articulate their experience of both structural inequalities and the experience of misrecognition. However, when women have spoken out in anger about violence and abuse, they have often been dismissed as being too emotional and insufficiently impartial (Ahmed 2004). Challenges to power and privilege are likely to evoke negative emotional responses from people (Turner & Stets 2005). The anger of subordinate groups often evokes angry responses in turn from the dominant groups as they perceive the threat it poses to their privileges. As Lyman (2004, 117) comments: 'I feel defensively angry when you suggest that I examine my privilege'.

May (1998) argues that men have a fundamental moral responsibility to challenge patriarchy, because they are collectively responsible for the harms attributed to it. He believes that men should feel some shame for, for example, their groups' complicity in the prevalence of rape. Guilt is often an emotion that arises initially when people first become aware of their privilege. Ahmed (2004), in discussing Indigenous issues, argues that the experience of shame is important in recognizing how our practices and our inaction have caused pain and loss for Indigenous peoples. In her view, acknowledging shame is also important in healing and reconciliation. Shame is thus a necessary response to the acknowledgement of the suffering of Indigenous peoples. For Jensen (2005), the overwhelming feeling of acknowledging white privilege is sadness. Such an emotion is evitable when we consider the level of racial injustice in modern society (Pease 2010).

The alternative to being moved by past and present injustices inflicted on oppressed people is to be detached from them, to claim that one is not in any way implicated in them. It seems as though people, when challenged about their privilege, have to choose between guilt or innocence (Lyman 2004). Injustices are perpetuated when people fail to respond emotionally to the suffering of other people. Thus, inequality is reproduced by suppressing or encouraging particular emotions. Nussbaum (2001) has observed that there are learned rules and impediments that impact on whether we feel compassion for others or not. She refers to the gendered dimensions of these impediments that limit the ability of many men to feel compassion for women's experiences. How can we use emotions to disrupt the process of men's defensiveness and avoidance when challenging male privilege and men's violence?

## **Towards a pedagogy of discomfort**

Education for social justice always evokes emotional responses. These can range from excitement to resentment and anxiety (Zembylas & Chubbuck 2009). When we challenge the dominant norms and practices of masculinity, we develop a different emotional relation to those norms and practices. Challenging men's privilege is likely to elicit strong emotional responses, because it touches men's investment in maintaining their current position. Thus, it is important to consider the role of emotions in critical pedagogical strategies that challenge men's violence and privilege (Kenway & Fitzclarence 1997).

What are the emotional patterns that reproduce patriarchal attitudes in men? How best does one develop interventions that can challenge these emotional patterns (White & Peretz 2010)? While a number of writers on critical pedagogy (Boler 1999; Ahmed 2004; Zembylas 2007; Zembylas & Chubbuck 2009) have identified emotions as being important to social justice education, they are largely ignored in profeminist and anti-violence work with men. Connell (2000) identified cathexis, or patterns of emotional attachment, as one of the key dimensions of unequal gender regimes alongside production relations, relations of power, and systems of symbolism. However, in spite of identifying emotional relations in the context of masculinity as a new direction in theory and research over ten years ago (Connell 2000), she has not addressed this issue in her subsequent work.

Generally, privileged groups' responses to challenges to their privilege fail to acknowledge the ways in which their emotional attachment to privilege shapes their responses. Hence, critical pedagogies intended to challenge privilege have to disrupt cherished beliefs; they have to interrogate the ways in which privileged positioning informs people's experience of the world (Zembylas & Chubbuck 2009). To challenge people's sense of self-interest involves a process of becoming unsettled, and strategies are required for this purpose. Consequently, I am interested in developing what Boler (1999) refers to as a 'pedagogy of discomfort'.

I propose two related approaches to engaging men's emotions in challenging their privilege. The first strategy is to foster social empathy by encouraging men's understanding of the consequences of their structural power and privilege for women. A practice that I have used here is the facilitation of patriarchy-awareness workshops based on the Racism Awareness model. These workshops use presentations, small group discussions, and simulation exercises to explore such issues as analyses of patriarchal culture, men's experience of power and domination, alternatives to patriarchal power, the impact of men's domination on women, social and personal blocks to men's ability to listen to women, and the potential for men to change. The workshops provide an opportunity for men to

move beyond their feelings of powerlessness in relation to gender issues and to identify ways of taking profeminist men's politics beyond the arena of personal change to incorporate collectivist and public political action (Pease 1997).

One of the workshop exercises involves drawing a timeline from 5000 BC to the present day across large sheets of paper joined together. The sheets of paper are laid out on the floor along with felt-tipped pens in front of the male workshop participants who are sitting in a circle. The participants are asked to think about the ways in which men have used their power over women. This may be in the form of violence, discrimination, or unequal treatment. It can include something that has happened to all women or just a few women; it can include something that has happened to women known to the participants, something they themselves have done, something they have heard about in the media, or something from history.

Participants are given a few minutes thinking time and then are invited to come forward and name the event they want to record on the timeline and the date on which it occurred. Having recorded the event on the timeline they return to their seats. Participants can come forward as many times as they want to until there is nothing more they want to record. By the end of the exercise, the timeline is covered with numerous incidents of violence and abuse across the whole spectrum. There is no discussion during the exercise, and at the end there is time for quiet reflection on the events they have recorded. At the close of the exercise, the participants discuss their feelings about it. Because the exercise always elicits experiences about women known to the men, it often involves vignettes of self-disclosure by the men about their own abusive treatment of women. The exercise always evokes emotional responses in the men as they reflect on the extent of the processes of victimization and violence against women throughout history, in contemporary society, and in their own lives and the lives of women they love.

A second strategy to bring men to reposition themselves in relation to privilege and violence is to reconceptualize their emotional pain (Pease 2002b). Thompson (1991) argues that if men deny their own feelings, and their own pain, they will not be able to acknowledge the pain of others; and they will be unable to recognize their privilege unless their pain and hurt have been validated. For Donovan (2007), men need to gain the courage and ability to acknowledge and express 'unmanly emotions' that challenge dominant definitions of masculinity. He believes that if men owned and expressed their pain and fear, their experience of anger would be lessened and their violence reduced. Of course, the acknowledgement of men's pain on its own is not enough—the plethora of masculinity therapy books and personal healing workshops for men are testimony to that. Rather, what is required

are strategies for connecting men's pain to their position in the social relations of gender.

One practice that I have used to reframe men's pain is collective memory work. Memory work is a method that builds on, and yet goes beyond, consciousness-raising. The method was developed by Frigga Haug (1987) to gain greater understanding of the resistance to the dominant ideology at the level of the individual—of how people internalize dominant values, and how their relations are colonized by dominant patterns of thought. Haug (1987, 13) describes memory work as 'a method for the unravelling of gender socialisation'. Her argument is that it is essential to examine subjective memories if we want to discover anything about how people appropriate objective structures.

By illustrating the ways in which people participate in their own socialization, their potential to intervene and change the world is expanded. By making conscious the way in which we have previously unconsciously interpreted the world, we are more able to develop resistance to this 'normality' (Haug 1987), and thus develop ways of subverting our own socialization. Furthermore, by recounting histories of oppression, suffering, and domination, those who occupy positions of privilege can find ways to recognize their privilege and their pain, and form alliances with those who are oppressed (McLaren & da Silvia 1993, 77).

I have used the method to explore men's socialization into dominant attitudes and practices and their resistance to the dominant ideology. In the context of a major research project on profeminist men (Pease 2000a), I developed four memory work exercises to examine aspects of internalized domination. These projects focused on father-son and mother-son relationships and experiences of homophobia and the objectification of women (Pease 2000b; 2000c; 2008). This was emotionally a very powerful method. Many times the men broke down and cried as they read out their memories to the group, and other men reported the tears running down their faces as they wrote down their memories in preparation for the meeting. What I found was that memory work enabled the participants to connect with their emotional histories, and it provided an opportunity for them to examine the emotional and psychological basis of their relationships with women and other men.

I discovered memory work when doing research with profeminist men. Because I was so impressed with the impact that the writing and telling of memories had on the participants (myself included) and the conversations that flowed from them, I have since set up memory work groups with no specific research agenda in mind. I have found memory work to have the capacity to initiate a process of

‘unconsciousness-raising’, which brings the social dimension of one’s experience to the fore. That being so, I think that memory work warrants further investigation as a pedagogical method of interrogating the emotional underpinnings of men’s adherence to privilege.

### **Emotional work and social justice**

As men are discouraged from expressing emotions, they are thought to be unable to provide the emotional labour required in relationships and to be largely absent from the care of children. Men can expect to have their emotional needs met by women. Because care-giving is associated with women, it is regarded by many men as ‘feminine’ and something to be avoided. This is largely because dominant definitions of masculinity do not include care-giving as a component of men’s lives (Hanlon 2009).

Lynch and Walsh (2009) refer to the work required to sustain loving relations as ‘love labouring’ or ‘emotional care work’. It involves the investment of energy, time, and resources. Lynch and Baker (2009) observe that there are significant inequalities in the doing of love, care, and solidarity work and being in receipt of love, care, and solidarity. This inequality of course is gendered. So if we are to achieve equality between men and women in the social relations of emotions, we have to problematize what Lynch and Baker call ‘the affective system’.

Lynch and Cantillon (2007) make a case for including education in emotional work in relation to love, care, and solidarity in general education. This would make such emotional work visible, increase its status, and challenge its gendered dimensions. They call for the development of a ‘carer citizen’. The development of the ‘carer citizen’ would need to engage men about the gendered nature of caring and emotional work. Ascribing caring and emotional work to women reproduces patriarchal discourses and male privilege. The challenge for men is to understand how affective inequalities in the doing and receiving of care and love reproduce inequalities in economic, political, and social relations (Lynch & Baker 2009). Thus, the fostering of care-giving masculinities (Hanlon 2009) and caring masculinities (Gartner et al. 2007) is an essential part of promoting gender equality. In this way, rather than focusing solely on the negative emotions of shame and guilt, profeminist practice can also encourage men to feel the positive emotions of empathy, pride, and compassion in the struggle for gender equality (White & Peretez 2010).



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## CHAPTER 5

### EMOTIONS AND PRIVILEGE: INVESTIGATING PRIVILEGING IN RELATION TO ASYLUM SEEKERS

*Jonny Bergman*

In my dissertation (Bergman 2010), I found that asylum seekers take empowering action when faced with a disempowering situation. Although this was an important finding in relation to earlier research, which has concentrated on the passivity resulting from such situations, in my dissertation I also found that the situation for asylum seekers was characterized by dependence and inhospitality. The assertion of their power to resist was triggered by emotions such as resignation, frustration, and resentment. Further, I discussed how the empowering acts so identified must be understood from the point of view of how they were made meaningful in that specific situation. One of the main conclusions was that asylum seekers found a basis on which to take empowering action in the meaningfulness of leaving Afghanistan and seeking asylum in Sweden. Going back was just not an option. For those asylum seekers who are not granted asylum in Sweden, this stands in direct opposition to Sweden's restrictive refugee policies.

This contradiction between Sweden's restrictiveness and the asylum seekers' standpoints calls for further investigation. I concluded my dissertation with a couple of questions.

Instead of asking what right asylum-seeking refugees have to reside here, which is currently done, we might ask ourselves what right 'we', as a collective of Swedish citizens, have to turn them down and not let them reside here? What remains now, perhaps, is to ask: what's wrong with us? (Bergman 2010, 186)

The conclusions I drew in my study of the lives of asylum seekers in Sweden thus made me more aware of my own privileged position, not only as a researcher but also as a Swedish citizen and a white, middle-class man. Such awareness set emotions in motion, later theorized as those of shame (see Ahmed 2004), sadness (see Jensen 2005), as well as guilt (see, for example, McIntosh 2012). Elaborating on these emotions and theorizing on privileged positions and practices, the natural step is to consider that

Only if and when we understand privileging, and how privileged positions are normalized in such situations, can we more fully understand the situation limiting the asylum-seeking refugees' actions in relation to a restrictive Swedish migration policy. (Bergman & Fahlgren 2013, 66).

That is, the better to understand the situation for asylum-seeking refugees, we need to look at who is privileged in relation to that situation (Bergman 2010; Bergman & Fahlgren 2013; Choules 2006). Theories of privilege and privileging have been identified as a way to investigate how a disempowering situation for asylum seekers (Bergman 2010) at the same time empowers other positions and practices (Bergman & Fahlgren 2013).

Using myself as a database (see McIntosh 2012; Bergman & Fahlgren 2013), I have come to realize the importance of emotions in understanding the production and reproduction, as well as the challenging, of privilege. In this essay, I will argue that to understand and challenge privileged positions in relation to asylum seekers' situation there is a need to investigate the role of emotions in producing and reproducing, as well as challenging, such positions and practices of privilege. One way of approaching this is to explore how resistance to privilege creates dilemmas, which in turn result in different sets of emotions, as exemplified in my personal account above. To make this point, though being able to use my own experiences as a database, I will instead make use of examples from research on the various immigration services, and more specifically their personnel's dilemmas and emotions related to their interaction with asylum seekers. On the one hand they are clearly in a privileged position in relation to asylum seekers, with a mandate to decide everything from whether the asylum seeker will get to stay or not to issues of housing and allowances; yet, on the other, they are also challenged in relation to their positions and practices of privilege by being faced with asylum seekers' resistance, as well as public accounts of personnel in the immigration services being too restrictive or—from various racist standpoints—too generous.

I will first present a discussion on privileging in relation to asylum seekers, elaborating on the concept of globally privileged citizenship, and then consider the literature on dilemmas and emotions among immigration service personnel (primarily in Sweden and Norway), before using theories on privilege to discuss how privileging in relation to asylum seekers can be researched by looking at dilemmas and emotions arising from the way they elect to face the situation.

### **Privileging in relation to asylum seekers**

In discourses on refugee protection, Kathryn Choules (2006) identifies charity and justice as the two distinct approaches towards refugee protection in place in recent centuries, none of which contains an analysis of power related to citizenship. In a charitable discourse, the 'other' is positioned as needing protection and in some way lacking in full adult capacity (Bergman 2010; Choules 2006), which places those in power in the benevolent and condescending role of protector. A privileged position related to citizenship can be exemplified in the way in which Swedish

policies on refugees takes on the role of protector in relation to children and to some on grounds of oppression, such as persecution due to gender and sexuality (see Migrationsverket 2014), without jeopardizing the state's position of privilege. The role of protector as maintaining privilege is also related to paternalism. Peggy McIntosh (1988, 4) points out that

whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work which will allow 'them' to be more like 'us'.

In a similar way, the Swedish policy on refugee reception has been discussed in terms of the dominant Swedish nationalist discourse, which is ultimately paternalistic in its treatment of asylum seekers, with its constructed self-image of providing a humane and fair reception and a show of solidarity—paternalist in that it 'seeks to help and raise "others" up to the same level as "us"' (Bergman & Fahlgren 2013, 60). The preferential right of interpretation reflects Sweden's dominant position in the world system, and subjects asylum seekers to an interpretation of their situation made solely by Swedish authorities. One example of this is the way in which repatriation efforts are depicted as being beneficial both for individual asylum seekers and for their countries of origin (Bergman 2010). Sweden's is a justice-based discourse founded on equal rights for all, where, although lip service is paid to the position of the powerless, the position of the powerful is not questioned. Fault is often seen to lie with the 'other'—with those who are non-male, non-white, non-able bodied, non-heterosexual, non-affluent, or, in relation to asylum seekers, non-citizens (Choules 2006). The relationship between citizenship and human rights is not without its frictions, as the universal character of human rights runs counter to the particularistic nation-state's citizenship (Soysal 2012).

When it comes to citizenship, attention needs to shift to those who are privileged. Far from being positioned in a neutral or benevolent position, the privileged are challenged because of their role in perpetrating injustice by retaining privilege (Choules 2006). Research into asylum seekers needs to incorporate how systems of domination relate to privileged positions—a conscious attempt 'reverse the gaze that sees refugees and asylum seekers as the problem and place it on those of us who occupy the privileged positions' (Choules 2006, 275). Choules has made the argument for investigating globally privileged citizenship—something she defines as the privilege of 'citizenship of a safe, stable and materially affluent country' (2006, 276)—as an unrecognized category of privilege. Like other categories of privilege, citizenship attaches to people by accident of birth, although it can also be achieved through naturalization (Choules 2006), and is thus a legal status that can change (although not easily, as the case of the worlds' refugees shows). Unlike

other categories of privilege such as maleness, whiteness, and able-bodiedness, the privilege of citizenship is not a physical characteristic. Although the power that can be exercised from the physical characteristics of being male, white, and able-bodied is socially constructed, people are generally unable to rid themselves of them (Choules 2006). Also, uniquely among the categories of privilege, the privilege of citizenship is acknowledged in international treaties and domestic legislation; restrictive policies on refugee protection and asylum, alongside strong border controls, serve to legitimize the privilege. The strong support for maintaining the privilege of citizenship is related to '*welfare nationalism*, the claim of nationals to a privileged standard of socioeconomic welfare' (Boswell 2006, 670, italics in original). The privilege of citizenship is also related to racism through nationalist discourses on immigration control and their basis in racialized nationalism directed at racialized groups (Mynott 2002). The Swedish case shows how repatriation policies go hand in hand with the discourses of the nation-state. Such discourses and policies have a clear ethnic dimension in how some groups are singled out in repatriation efforts (Johansson 2005).

The privilege of citizenship has its benefits for those who are citizens of a safe, stable, and materially affluent country, so not all countries' citizens can expect the same benefits. Similarly, the privilege of citizenship intersects with other categories of privilege such as being male, white, middle-class, able-bodied, or heterosexual, so not all citizens in any one country can expect the same benefits. Even so, a discussion of globally privileged citizenship brings another dimension to the theorizing on privilege, which is especially helpful in relation to refugees and asylum seekers. Privileging in relation to asylum seekers using the category of 'globally privileged citizenship' looks promising, but needs elaboration if we are to understand how this kind of privilege might play out in different situations and how in different circumstances it might intersect with other categories of privilege. Looking at the specific situation in which immigration service personnel's privileged positions and practices operate, I propose to make the empirical case for such an analysis.

### **Dilemmas and emotions in work with asylum seekers**

Drawing on the literature on the dilemmas, challenges, and emotions that face immigration service personnel, I will outline a possible path for future research on privileging in relation to asylum seekers. The choice has fallen on institutional personnel because they, more than most who enjoy the global citizenship privilege, are faced with challenges to the privilege of citizenship. This is not to attach blame to any specific group of citizens, of course; it merely reflects a hope that the examples will demonstrate that this could be a fruitful avenue in understanding the question of privileging in relation to asylum seekers.



Research into the working situation of children's case workers at Migrationsverket, the Swedish Migration Board, has shown how they experience challenges to their role and in their work depending on 'the intersection between conflicting policy objectives, and given the contradictions inherent in their role as street-level bureaucrats' (Ottosson et al. 2012, 247). One of the dilemmas that presents itself is the conflict between the organizational demands for efficiency and the protection of the interests of the child in relation to the Swedish Migration Board's priorities (Ottosson et al. 2012; Lundberg 2011). Managing these types of dilemmas in bureaucratic settings, where the questions of autonomy versus control, responsiveness versus standardization, and demand versus supply are resolved in favour of control, standardization, and supply, makes the working situation difficult (Hjörne et al. 2010). However, it has also been suggested that, in providing welfare services in general at the street level, there are still possibilities for professional autonomy, even when faced with increased control and accountability (Hjörne et al. 2010). Although there is very little room for manoeuvre in the asylum system, this has indeed been found to be the case among welfare professionals working with asylum-seeking children in Wales, where examples were found of questioning and even challenges to policies by frontline staff (Dunkerley et al. 2005). Institutional logic, however, makes challenging the systems of efficiency and economy difficult, as has been shown in the case the Swedish Migration Board, where by 'repeated and various types of interaction rituals, an emotional regime is enacted and sustained that provides employees with a sense of authenticity, meaning and organisational loyalty' (Wettergren 2010, 400).

In the case of an institutional setting such as the Swedish Migration Board and its particular emotional regime, personnel are protected from ambivalent situations in which they might have to juggle being publicly accused of being cynical and restrictive while at the same time being made the target of racist comments in letters or private comments (Wettergren 2010). Against this, Swedish policies have to attend to a situation in which, while operating a system that is depicted as just and equitable with the humane, fair, and individual examination of each case, the policies on the Swedish reception of asylum seekers have to attend to its emphasis on a restrictiveness, 'burden sharing' among states taking in refugees, containment, and repatriation (Bergman 2010). Swedish asylum policy also has to address xenophobic tendencies. Åsa Wettergren (2010) has shown how at the Swedish Migration Board an emotional regime of 'procedural correctness', drawing on democratic, humanitarian, and individual rights inscribed in the Alien's Act and the Administrative Act, offers an ideal identity of a kind, self-confident, and proud professional whose duty it is to execute legislation in the service of the customer/applicant; 'procedural correctness' becomes a 'fantasy of impossible perfect correspondence between the law and reality' and 'the professional is a

phantom that epitomizes the exemplary emotional dispositions of the officers' (414), and by 'becoming the professional' and aligning with the emotional regime of the Swedish Migration Board, its staff can manage their feelings of shame and pride, thus escaping personal responsibility by emphasizing that it is their employer who is the 'guardian of the right to asylum'.

From the point of view of ethical conduct, Helga Eggebö (2013) has found that emotions have an ambiguous status in the bureaucratic work of the immigration services in Norway. In deciding applications for family integration in Norway, employees gave accounts of dilemmas and challenges that were analysed from the point of view of aligning with two different ethical principles (Eggebö 2013): emotions can be understood as indispensable for ethical conduct, yet, equally, they may cloud judgement and thereby threaten democracy and justice. The contestation is between arguing that emotions have no place in a rational bureaucracy (see du Gay 2008) and that emotions are essential for ethical conduct (see Bauman 1991). On the one hand, there is the potential to achieve justice if everyone is treated equally and according to democratically defined legislation and rules: in realizing the principle of equal treatment, emotions are not wanted. On the other hand, bureaucracies can be essentially immoral, and their emotional detachment, distance, and rationalization can allow for injustice and even atrocities. Examples of both approaches to emotion in bureaucracy are to be found in various immigration services, although ambiguously, they point towards emotions being put to one side (Eggebö 2013). Eggebö, like Ahmed (2004), offers a critique of these two opposing views on ethical conduct and justice by showing the ambiguity between them. An example of this ambiguity can also be seen in the following quote from Wettergren (2010, 401) about the Swedish Migration Board:

Officers think that they are professional rather than cynical, empathetic but (necessarily) detached, and that their job is essentially linked to objective and cognitive assessments of an applicant's right to protection. Instead, they are orienting towards collegial recognition and status while continuously negotiating their feelings for the applicant.

Research into the role of emotions when it comes to privileging in relation to asylum seekers thus needs to be elaborated further to investigate the contingencies between emotions and other categories such as rationality, ethical conduct, and justice. In other words, we must ask what emotions do in a specific situation (see Ahmed 2004; Eggebö 2013).

These examples from earlier research into immigration service personnel working with issues concerning asylum seekers and their situation show that both dilemmas and emotions are present in this work when challenged with the contradictions inherent in the reception of asylum seekers. However, challenges to

a privileged position do not readily translate into an awareness of privilege, nor do they necessarily promote a questioning of these privileged positions. Rather, feeling unjustly accused of being too restrictive, Swedish Migration Board personnel can actually end up arguing that they are defending the right of asylum against racist undercurrents. This shows how 'the emotional regime' at the Board 'is tied to the illusion that asylum seekers can be rejected in a humane and dignified way' (Wettergren 2010, 401). What the discussion of dilemmas and emotions in relation to their work with asylum seekers also shows, however, is that privileged positions and practices are being challenged at the individual level. Seemingly, these (mute) challenges to privileged positions and practices do not seep through to the institutional and discursive levels, where privileged positions and practices rather find support, as in the example of the emotional regime of the Swedish Migration Board, which

must be seen as inherent to a larger nationalist project to safe-guard the (increasingly perceived as threatened) privileges of Swedish citizens by controlling the influx of destitute foreigners, without recognizing the dehumanization of the self and the others involved in this practice. (Wettergren 2010, 415)

This speaks directly to the use of a concept such as global citizenship privilege for analysing privileging in relation to asylum seekers, but also, given earlier theorizing on other intersecting categories of privilege, to the difficulties of consciousness-raising in relation to privileged positions and practices. There is an ongoing discussion on how privilege may be analysed and challenged by incorporating emotions into the theorizing on privilege (see Pease 2012), which, further developed, will open for an analysis of privileging in relation to asylum seekers.

### **Investigating privilege**

The nature of privilege is such that for those who *are* privileged it is difficult to recognize that fact, while for those outside the charmed circle it is all the more easy to see (Bailey 1998). On the invisibility and normality of privilege, Pease (2006) demonstrates how the privileged are also less likely to be researched or studied, reflecting the fact that they are seen as 'normal' and thus do not have to be investigated. The privileged come to represent a hegemonic norm whereby 'white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian and financially secure people come to embody what it means to be normal' (Perry 2001, 192). This norm also comes to represent the base line from which negative evaluations of difference are measured. Pease (2010) has set out and discussed certain aspects of privilege in relation to the categories of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability, identifying key dimensions of privilege that need to be acknowledged if one is to make sense of how individuals gain different benefits through privilege: 'the invisibility of

privilege by those who have it; the power of the privileged group to determine the social norm; the naturalisation of privilege and the sense of entitlement that accompanies privilege' (Pease 2010, 9). Michael Kimmel (2003, 1) illustrates this by saying that privilege is like running with the wind at one's back—'It feels like just plain running, and we rarely if ever get the chance to see how we are sustained, supported, and even propelled by that wind.' To be in a situation of privilege is further related to feelings of being at home in the world. Peggy McIntosh (1988) writes that positions of privilege frees people from feelings of fear, anxiety, a sense of not being welcome, of not being real; by escaping penalties or dangers that others suffer, by not having to hide or to be in disguise, the privileged are also kept from having to be angry. Feeling comfortable, safe, or entitled to various rights and resources are also connected to belonging (Yuval Davis 2011). It can thus be very comfortable to be white, male, heterosexual and middle class, as the wind will be at your back.

In order to break out of these illusions of favour and comfort, in order to understand society better, there is a need to examine arenas in which we are privileged as well as those where we are not—again, to borrow a metaphor from Kimmel (2003, 1), 'only when you turn around and face that wind do you realize its strength'. Having our privilege challenged, we are also unable to relax in a position of privilege. We can never be quite sure of our position of privilege as it varies according to time, place, gender, ethnicity, and class, and in ways that we can never be sure of (Hacking 1990; Svensson 2007). In maintaining the vulnerability and uncertainty of privileged positions—for we are all vulnerable to the risk of being treated as 'the other'—emotions are an important feature of normalization (Fahlgren 2005; Bergman & Fahlgren 2013). Privilege is also challenged through the emotions of the 'other', as in the example where the situation for asylum seekers has been found to prompt the resignation, frustration, and resentment that trigger resistance (Bergman 2010). Such emotional responses to injustices on the part of subordinate groups in turn often evoke defensive emotions of anger in privileged groups, caught between emotions of guilt and innocence when they see their privileges threatened or challenged (Pease 2012). Guilt and shame can be regarded as promoting change, while a refusal to feel guilt and shame makes it difficult to acknowledge one's complicity in the oppression of others (Pease 2010).

In investigating privilege in relation to oppression, we also need to acknowledge that privilege is something that is done. Rather than seeing the concepts of race, gender, and class as categories, we should be more attentive to the processes of racializing, gendering, and classing (Pease 2006). Understanding and challenging positions and practices of privilege thus involves both investigating what

comprises certain aspects of privilege *and* raising awareness of how certain groups and individuals in society are privileged and gain benefits in relation to others. The invisibility of privilege to those who are privileged, its naturalization and normalization, calls for research that digs into different situations, looking at how privileged positions and practices are produced and reproduced in that certain situation. To understand privilege 'we must investigate privilege at interactional, cultural and structural levels at the same time that we explore the intersections of privilege with oppression' (Pease 2010, 35). To keep the scope of such research manageable as well as to acknowledge that different categories of privilege are played out differently according to time and place, situational analysis can be employed. Situational analysis (Clarke 2005) delimits a situation to be analysed at different levels, where the interactional factors of a certain situation, not to mention the cultural and structural factors, can be investigated. By mapping what is going on, who the actors are, and what the positions in a situation are (Clarke 2005), the theories of privilege can be used to establish an understanding of the positions and practices of privilege.

The literature on challenges to privilege shows that people respond with different discursive strategies to different categories of privilege. White privilege research, for example, has found discursive strategies such as colour blindness, equal opportunity racism, and meritocracy, as well as open challenges to white privilege (Nenga 2011). Sandi Kawecka Nenga (2011) has taken these as a starting point in looking at whether similar discursive strategies might be found in her research on class privilege. Using the case of how affluent youth volunteers respond to class privilege in volunteer work, Nenga shows that the privileged young exercise agency in response to class privilege in the form of evading class, employing equalizing discourses, blaming cultural capital—not simply challenging class privilege, in other words. As discursive strategies in response to class privilege both resemble and diverge from responses to white privilege, Nenga (2011, 263) points out that 'discursive responses to privilege are not universal and vary according to the type of privilege being consolidated or challenged'. Without going into the detail of different discursive strategies in response to white and class privilege, we might ask what are then the discursive strategies employed in relation to globally privileged citizenship.

My suggestion is that the Swedish Migration Board's personnel, in their interaction with asylum seekers, would be an interesting group to consider, as they face the oppression of the other, and are therefore also challenged in their own positions and practices of privilege. As the examples from the general literature on immigration service personnel shows, they are indeed challenged in their positions and practices of privilege: they are challenged by dint of meeting the

disempowered situation of asylum seekers as well as asylum seekers' resistance and attempts to seek empowerment (Bergman 2010); they are challenged by dint of their having to juggle being publicly accused of being cynical and restrictive, while at the same time being the target of racist comments (Wettergren 2010). Given an institutional setting such as that of the Swedish Migration Board, their responses to challenges to their privileged position have a direct bearing on the dilemmas, emotions, and affinity with the collective of professionals in their work with asylum seekers. By looking at challenges to privilege *and* the role of emotions in the production and reproduction of the same, it is possible to unravel the discursive strategies inherent in the privilege of citizenship. Finally, importantly, we must not forget that the aim is to improve the situation for asylum seekers, and as such needs to be accountable to them. Accountability in this case needs to be turned on its head: 'Accountability usually occurs when those with less power are accountable to those with more power. In challenging privilege and oppression, this is reversed' (Pease 2010, 182).

## Conclusions

I have argued that to understand and hopefully to challenge privileged positions in relation to asylum seekers we need to investigate the role that emotions play in reproducing privilege, and the way in which emotions can play a role in investigating and challenging the same. One way to approach these issues is to look closely at ambivalences and dilemmas. I would argue that meeting and working with asylum seekers challenges the positions and practices of privilege, creating unease at the emotional responses. This is not to suggest, though, that it makes individuals conscious of their own privileges, or, being made conscious of their privileges, challenges them. Earlier research into the working conditions of immigration service personnel suggests that emotional responses to having one's privileges challenged on the personal level are resolved in a variety of different emotional responses on the institutional and structural level that in fact reproduce positions and practices of privilege. I would suggest that in order to analyse privilege in relation to asylum seekers, an exploration of the dilemmas and emotions of working with asylum seekers is a way to further investigate how discourses, structures, and practices sustain and normalize certain ways of privileging.

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## CHAPTER 6

### ON BEING A RACE TRAITOR: THE EMOTIONS OF BEING/PASSING AS PRIVILEGED

*Ulrika Schmauch*

A terrorist attacks the government building in Oslo and slaughters over 60 youngsters at a summer camp. Hours later the expert on terrorism on the news talks about the threats from al-Qaeda that have been made against Norway because of its presence in Afghanistan.

Jimmie Åkesson, the leader of the racist Sweden Democrats, writes an article in the local newspaper saying that Muslims are the biggest foreign threat to Sweden's safety not least because they have so many children and want to make the whole country Islamic.

In Forserum, a town in Southern Sweden, Somali parents keep their children out of school as they are not safe from physical and verbal racist attacks on their way home.

And once again a student uses Somalis as an example of an immigrant group that differs most from Swedes in relation to education, literacy, employment, and (level of) culture.

I consider myself somewhat of a race traitor for two reasons. One reason is my antiracist practice and race-critical research and the other being a white 'Swedish' woman married to a practising Muslim black man from Somalia, and it is this second reason I want to focus on in this essay. My choice of husband is not a political statement, although of course, just like other personal matters, it is political. Talking about oneself as a race traitor risks, as Moon and Flores (2000) argue, creating a narrative of the enlightened subject who heroically distances herself from exploitation, privilege, and the subordination of fellow human beings. I am not that naïve. Of course I am a part of the everyday doings of race and living within a culture that is constructed on racist premises. But I have made a choice, and continue to make the choice, not to forget and to try to do what I can to use my privileges as a way to abolish that very privilege. Having my political convictions and my research questioned is something I have brought on myself, something I can live with; when it comes to my marriage and the everyday racist comments about my husband, his religion, and our family, it is far more hurtful and difficult to put into words.

Let me start by saying that this has been a difficult essay to write. For two reasons. The first is that it deals with something very close to my heart—my insecurities,

fears, hopes, and thoughts, the ongoing debates in my head that never seem to be resolved and probably never will be. It is personal.

The second reason is that I am worried that I will fall into the trap of portraying myself, the white body, as the centre of the universe. Yet another white person feeling sorry for herself for not having the privileges she is used to having, or feeling guilty for having privileges denied to others, intent on portraying herself as 'a good white'. I am not trying to deny the privileges that my white body gives me, but I want to suggest that the dichotomy of 'victim of racism' versus 'not victim of racism' needs to be understood as more complex and contradictory, and that racism is not only linked to the racialization of individual bodies, but also to the racialization of relationships between bodies of different races. I want to look at what happens when the hegemonic racial boundaries between racialized groups are transgressed.

I use the term racism to refer to those everyday practices in a historical context that construct an existence where privilege, exploitation, marginalization, and silence are ordered along 'racial' lines (Essed 1991). In a Swedish context this means that employment, financial assets, cultural influence, health, desirable housing, travel opportunities, provision of eldercare and childcare, and so on are on an aggregated level concentrated to those in the population who are seen as being racially and culturally Swedish—and one central aspect of being seen as Swedish is being white, and the right kind of white (Schmauch 2006). Racism helps to reinforce, and sometimes to weaken, other structures and systems of domination such as class, gender, and heteronormativity.

This means that I view racism as a practice, as a material and cultural structure that positions people of different body types, and not primarily an attitude, a mental predisposition, or an extremist political ideology. While overtly racist parties are on the rise in Sweden, and indeed in the rest of Europe, there were still about 90 per cent of Swedish voters who did not vote for the so called Sweden Democrats in the most recent election.

I'm having lunch with my colleagues and we're talking about the research one of us has done on bisexual men. Another colleague turns to me and asks, 'When are you going to have kids? And how would Mohammed react if the kid turns out to be gay? I meet a lot of Muslim women in my gym-class and they often complain about people not being accepting towards them, but they are not very tolerant when it comes to gays and lesbians themselves. I mean, you can't expect people to be accepting of you if you are not accepting of others!'

### **A race traitor (in) passing**

The most central trait of the race traitor is a refusal to accept the supremacy of her own race and the centrality of maintaining racial boundaries. In so doing, the traitor questions the very normalcy of the maintenance of these boundaries and, one could argue, the structure itself. In this essay I write about everyday experiences and comments from family, friends, and co-workers. I want to stress that many of them are people who I love. They are not 'evil'. They would gladly sign petitions against racism, and I am certain they think that refugees should be granted protection and permanent residence permits. So I do not believe that they are extreme in any way. Everyday racism is, after all, normal, practised by normal people.

Racism is something that some are forced to learn in order to protect ourselves from it; trying to act in such a way as the risk of being subject to everyday racism is kept to a minimum.

I burn myself when taking food out of the oven and it leaves an ugly weal on my arm. 'I wonder if they'll think my husband did it to me because they think "those Muslims" are violent and beat "their" women?'

I complain to a friend that I am sick and tired of Islamophobic comments about how evil my husband is. My friend looks at me and says 'Well, come on! You know they are more prejudiced against women in those cultures!'

A colleague talks about her annoying husband who gets in a bad mood when she's out late because he doesn't like being at home on his own, and I'm thinking to myself 'If I told a similar story about my husband, people would assume he wants me to be home at night because in his religion/culture they see women as property that they have the right to control. And if women don't do what they're told, they're severely beaten.'

I am not sure if people actually would react as I fear, of course but I'm not entirely sure. Cannot fully know. One could argue that I am overreacting, just like people of colour who react to racism are often accused of overreacting—thinking too much about racism, assuming that people are thinking something they would never think. But I disagree. Part of being the victim of everyday racism, either oneself or vicariously, is that you develop what du Bois called a double consciousness (1989; see also Collins 2001)—of knowing both your own ideas, culture, and interpretations and the dominant form of consciousness—to view yourself from the privileged position. So even if I cannot know for certain, I will not risk it and keep my mouth shut.

As I am white, racism is easier to avoid. It is possible for me under most circumstances to 'pass' as a common white/Swedish woman with no personal emotional attachments to people of colour. I can live my life as a 'normal' white woman as long as my husband's identity is kept hidden. This means that I escape

some of the racist comments, but it also means that some people feel 'safe' to express views on Muslims, black people, immigrants that they probably would not have said if they, as a woman in Frankenberg's study says, 'knew who they were talking to' (1993); 'safe' from those overreacting people of colour who always take exception—as a colleague of mine put it, 'always claiming to be discriminated against, although it's their own fault they're not successful'.

And, once again, students assume immigrant youth are torn between cultures, have an identity crisis, live in marginalized neighbourhoods, like hip-hop, and/or just generally suffer.

And once again a student uses Somalis as an example of an immigrant group that differs most from Swedes in relation to education, literacy, employment, and (level of) culture.

The position of the race traitor is, of course, a gendered position. While back in the Nineties the academic journal *Race Traitor: Treason to Whiteness is Loyalty to Humanity* had a tendency to describe race traitors as heroic men who claimed to have unlearned their privileges and had married women of colour as a political statement of their commitment to anti-whiteism, the position for women who betray their race has historically had different consequences. While white men who get involved with women of colour have been seen as freeing women from the patriarchal relationships they are assumed to have with men of 'their own' kind/culture/race, white women who get involved with men of colour have historically been seen as either promiscuous or sexually unsuccessful, naïve, and/or as potential victims of tribal/Islamic/cultural violence. The danger of white women mixing races is not only seen as a threat to individual women, but also to their potential children, as being of 'mixed' background is often portrayed as living in constant rootlessness, and it is assumed that men of colour not only mistreat (white) women, but also are controlling of their children, not least their sexuality. And, of course, white women who betray their race are a threat to the race/the nation/culture itself as other races threaten to take over the white race—one child at a time (Frankenberg 1993).

My uncle looks at me with a worried look. 'A Muslim? Oh girl, you be careful.' And I angrily say 'Yeah, 'cos they bite, right?' And he looks me in the eye and says 'Yes.' With a look that begs me not to be naïve and put myself in danger.

Before my teenaged sister-in-law moves to Britain with her mother and three brothers, she gets into a fight with her teacher and starts skipping school. A year later I hear that the teachers at the school are deeply worried about her since they are convinced she was taken to Somalia against her will and forced into an arranged marriage.

Although we know that many racist movements tend to position women as passive and in need of protection, and that racist ideology and practice has tended to privilege men and masculinity, the examples in this essay show that women too

struggle to maintain boundaries between desired and undesired intimate relationships between cultures/races/religions, and that women's bodies still tend to become the battleground in the reproduction of racism (Ware 1997).

### **Yes, I am still 'white'**

Speaking from a similar position as mine, Rastas (2004) asks the question 'Am I still White?' when married to a black man and with children of colour? When I feel the pain they are subjected to and hearing comments about my family? She comes to the conclusion that we should stop talking about 'colour' altogether in order to make race disappear as a social category. While I too think that our respective positions tend to make us vulnerable to racism, and in some way victims of discrimination by proxy as well as destabilized whiteness, I strongly disagree with the conclusion that we should stop talking about race. Not speaking about race has been used as a way to continue to silence experiences of racism and to maintain the status quo (Bailey 1998; Schmauch 2006). Also, many of the privileges connected to whiteness—having one's culture represented in a differentiated way, not fearing that it will be assumed one is sexually willing, not being denied housing based on race or ethnic background, taking for granted that one's right to be in the country will not be questioned, and so on (McIntosh 1990)—are linked to the physical appearance of whiteness and not to the social position of the individual body in relation to people of colour. Therefore, denying one's whiteness, I would say, is a way to underestimate the racism that people of colour face on a daily basis.

I would rather understand the position of the race traitor as someone who decentres the centre. Although that way of seeing is in some ways off-centre, it is still a position within the centre. It is to me a standpoint, in Sandra Harding's sense (1991): a political position achieved by collective struggle, a choice to make a stand, and one that requires taking responsibility for my interactions and for developing everyday practices that do not reinforce the racist status quo. Privileges, after all, should be used to abolish privilege.

Some argue that it is impossible to understand the emotional and physical experiences of those living different lives than one's own. That it is impossible to truly feel what it is like to be marginal. While that might be true, I agree with hooks who writes,

And indeed we must be willing to acknowledge that individuals of great privilege who are in no way victimized are capable, via their political choices, of working on behalf of the oppressed. Such solidarity does not need to be rooted in shared experience. It can be based on one's political and ethical understanding of racism and one's rejection of domination. (1992, 13–14)

The position of the race traitor—entered into out of love or political conviction—tends to heighten one's sensibility to racism and urges one to take at least that first baby step, to develop the double consciousness with which to look at the world from two perspectives at once. This does not mean it is the responsibility of people of colour to make sure that white people do develop such a consciousness, but rather it makes the normality of privilege more difficult to uphold. Yes, in many ways it is an uncomfortable standpoint. But perhaps knowing that privileges are not earned, that they are not the natural order of things, is also uncomfortable? To my mind, it certainly should be.

### **Being and passing as privileged**

Racism not only serves to keep people of colour in their place, but also to keep white people in theirs. By controlling women's bodies and drawing boundaries for acceptable/non-acceptable sexual relationships, the most intimate of relationships are affected by racism. This not only affects the relationships themselves and their inherent structures of privilege, power, pleasure, and pain, but also how racism, gender, and other structures play out in everyday life. After all, as Ambjörnsson (2006) writes, heteronormativity is not merely about controlling LGBTQ bodies, but about controlling what kind of heterosexuality can be seen as normal, healthy, and acceptable.

The common notion of who experiences racism, the common notion that we only get hurt if the treatment we suffer from is directly directed at us, is too simplistic. I would suggest that we need an understanding of racism that takes into account its dual nature, both directed at keeping outsiders out, and keeping the inside clean and pure and free from degeneration, and how these are intertwined. Only then will people start to take into account the pain of seeing loved ones hurt, silenced, and disrespected. This does not mean that racism directed at those in the centre is of the same magnitude, or even that white people and people of colour suffer from the same kind of racism. In the end, my white body is subjected to racism not because of the way it is racialized per se, but because of relationships I was free to choose. The habit of viewing social actors solely as individuals, cut loose from all alliances and solidarities, responsibilities and intimacies with others might be all too common at a time of increasing social atomization, but it tells only part of the story of about the maintenance of racist structures of privilege.

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# **Neo-liberalism, fear, and fraudulence**

## CHAPTER 7

### NEO-LIBERALISM—A REGIME OF FEAR?

*Siv Fahlgren, Katarina Giritli Nygren, Anders Johansson, and Eva Söderberg*

Our aim in this essay is to explore emotion's importance to the power and politics of normalization in the context of neo-liberal governmentality (Larner 2000)—what neo-liberalism does to us emotionally, in other words. Following Bronwyn Davies, who took Frigga Haug's memory work and developed it into what she terms 'collective biography work' (Davies & Gannon 2006), we have conducted this analysis as collective memory work. The four of us have worked together for several years, and have thus established a degree of mutual trust and commitment. Having decided to do memory work on the theme 'neo-liberalism—a regime of fear' (Davies 2011), we spent a whole day noting down our memories of key moments of fear. One could, perhaps, say that the fact that our choice fell on memories of fear—and not memories of, say, joy—shows a predetermined opinion of neo-liberalism. However, fear being a crucial part of all forms of government, we prefer to see our work as an investigation of the particular aspects of fear that inhabit neo-liberal governmentality, and which are not necessarily more pernicious than other types of fear that are mobilized in the governing process.

In order to come as close as possible to 'an embodied sense of what happened' in our four different memories (Davies & Gannon 2006: 3), we first wrote down our memories and then reading them aloud to one another. When listening, we consciously set out to ask ourselves, 'What is it to be this? What does it feel like?' The memories were rewritten and reread until we all had a collective sense of what happened in the memory and what it felt to be the 'I' concerned, our stated aim being a better understanding of how we as individuals are discursively constituted in particular embodied moments, since this makes way for particular, local, and situated truths (Davies & Gannon 2006, 3–4).

We then discussed these memories in an email exchange spread over the course of a couple of months. They were also subject to a theoretical approach that is attentive to normalization and gender, class, and ethnicity/race, and how these issues might be connected to neo-liberal governmentality and politics. We draw on Sarah Ahmed (2004) to describe the emotions as historical, cultural, and social practices that form both individual and collective bodies. The emotions in this sense are not something 'I' have, located in each individual, but instead are

movements in time and space, or movements between individuals that form their bodies. It is through emotions, or our response to our surroundings, that individuals and collective bodies alike are shaped. We are one another's preconditions for the kind of life and identity that might be possible. Thus our social location is integral to our emotions, for emotions are constituted and conditioned, experienced, and expressed in a social location that makes them (im)possible (Ahmed 2004, 4–12; Bränström Öhman et al. 2011).

Collective memory work makes memories collective in a special sense, and thus we have decided to present the memories in this essay anonymously, one by one. After that, we use a dialogue form to explore and comment on how best to understand the way emotions serve to produce the position of the legitimate neo-liberal subject from different and contradictory angles. This dialogue too is anonymized, since we do not think it is important to know which one of us made which comment. By retaining the dialogue form, we remain true to the collective nature of the work, but without the compromises required of a unified text, by allowing the ambivalences and differences between our voices to be heard. At the end of the essay, we comment not only on our findings, but also on the course of the work itself.

### **The fear of losing control**

The crying lady's grief over not being able to go out is lessened by using Sobril. Getting outside for fresh air on a daily basis is not part of a reasonable living standard—this is what the decision-makers have decided. Who is to take care of whom, after all? I'm afraid of getting old, although it's not ageing or death that scares me, but becoming dependent on others. I'm afraid of not being able to look after myself. My whole body aches when I think that someone else will be deciding what I need and don't need. There's no space for the individual. Afraid that no one will listen, afraid of being scared. Don't want to be a burden, don't want to lose control. I have to manage by myself, have to be strong, have to save money, must buy insurance, mustn't become dependent. (Memory 1)

— When thinking about how neo-liberalism is produced by fear and reproduces fear, I do think we have to view it as an emotional reaction to a perceived threat embedded with social meaning. The threat appears as a call for action; an interpellation which constructs and assumes a moral agency and certain dispositions to social action that necessarily follow. It is emotionally an enabling praxis, but also a technique of government that sets in motion a reflexive subjectivity deemed to bear the consequences of its actions. The fear of not being strong enough, not being able, and through this insecurity a contempt for weakness, dependency, and neediness are produced and upheld.

— Yes, and central to the doing of normality today is the individualized notion of being ‘at risk’ (Rose 1996). By formulating or creating specific dangers and risks in a community, ‘normal’ becomes re-assembled as *not* being ‘at risk’, a position that is constantly narrowing and becoming more difficult, not to say impossible, to perform. Being ‘at risk’ thus tends to be described in terms of individual and personal failures, and as an individual who lacks the cognitive, emotional, practical, and ethical skills to take personal responsibility for rational self-management.

— You could also see how the fear of the degeneration or disintegration comes to be associated more with some bodies than others (Ahmed 2004), and the narratives that seek to preserve the present through anxiety and fear lodge that which is fearful in those bodies that take on fetish qualities as objects of fear (Ahmed 2004, 78–9)—in this case the elderly/dependent/ill. Which we will become. It may be that fear allows the storyteller to remain closer to the object of the ‘normal’ community at the same time as it transforms the elderly into an object of fear. Fear and the expressions of contempt create ‘that which I am not’ but fear to become. Her recoil from fear involves turning towards a ‘fellow feeling’ of life as it *should* be (Ahmed 2004, 64–74), a life where one is included, with dignity, and has full control. Thus the fear created by the individualistic neo-liberal discourse is normalizing the very same discourse. Fear becomes the driving emotion in this normalization.

## Fear and insecurity

She’s standing in the middle of the bare exhibition room in front of a huge, heavy, dark mantle, hanging from ceiling to floor, trailing somewhat on the floor.

The mantle is thick. The surface is irregular, lacklustre, rather matted and oily in places—and it curves in and out. Like a rolling landscape.<sup>29</sup>

It is her fascination that has brought her to a halt here, just as much as the unease she feels. She stares at the mantle. It is forbidding, but still draws her closer. She feels as if it has consumed all the light in the room, like a black hole, and that she’s being drawn in herself.

It pulls and pulls.

She intensifies her focus to pull back and stop the motion. At first she sees the colours: all of the shades from black, dark grey, light grey, and dirty brown. Then the shapes start to form and appear. An ear thrusts out from the dirty fluff, a paw sticks out from a soft fold and a nose from another. She discovers teddy bear conjoined to teddy bear—and other soft animals—making up the impenetrable structure of the mantle.

More ears, paws, noses—and many black-shining pairs of eyes bobbing up and down on the soft sea.

A mass grave.

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<sup>29</sup> The artwork, Fatima Abelli Bifeldt’s *Regrets collect like old friends*, ‘a weave of discarded soft toys’, was on display in the 2014 spring salon at Liljevalchs in Stockholm.

Her discomfort has already given way to a feeling of disgust, but she stays put. In front of the soft toys, in front of the guards at the border between dream and wakefulness, the symbols of safety, the transitional objects. (Memory 2)

— The image of the dirty, sewn-together soft toys creates an emotion, a sense of how security is snatched away; the symbols of safety, those that have safeguarded her relationship with the world have been dragged through the dirt and buried in a mass grave. Distancing, rejecting, but still affected by what she has rejected.

— It is as if the object of disgust threatens her by the possibility that what is 'me' or 'us' might slide into 'not-me, not-us'. Turning away in fear and disgust—is that the same as turning towards a nostalgic 'home'? And what does this emotional signal do? What is normalized through this? Do we see here a nostalgic yearning for the 'home' that neo-liberalism has dismantled? Was that a better place?

— When the teddy bear 'dies' or is 'killed', it is also the symbolism it is associated with which is so brutally brought into question. The child, innocence, security, culture, kindness, expectation (Söderberg 2009): an expression of a powerful security discourse. The insight takes time; all the sewn-together animals demand the onlooker's attention. Does she feel the loss of earlier dreams and hopes?

— If we have buried our transitional objects, how shall we be able to carry on? Why does she stay there, feeling sick; why has she stopped in front of the mantle? Why does she choose not to leave? We have to choose. Everyone has to choose. That is the neo-liberal discourse. Within a neo-liberal regime she is reduced to a rational, choice-making, autonomous, and responsible subject, based as she is on the subject of individual choices, both irreducible and non-transferable (Foucault 2008, 272).

— Frozen by 'raven-black eyes of fire' of affective waste, affections turn into waste. No meaningful choice is possible. Death as the ironic undoing of rational choice. Our constant risk of becoming abject waste.

## **The fear of (in)visibility**

If there isn't a text? If writing isn't possible? If things don't get better? If I can't? If I don't want to? If I wasn't forced to? (Memory 3)

— No memory as such, just broken pieces, fragments. If, if, if ... Why? Writing and doing research means being constantly related to norms and processes of normalization. Audit culture reinforces such aspects, but they are always there, important parts of how we affectively engage with the world. Writing about norms means that you are always performatively iterating them; no matter how critical you may be, but also perhaps (and hopefully) producing some change through this. Visibility, clarification, measurability, security under the law—there is always something of me in the norms that I relate to.

— Objecting to norms always has a portion of self-hate, because norms are never purely exterior. Norms breed on me understanding them—which I have to if I am to criticize them. They are intimately linked to the very thought of understanding one another. They are ‘being together’, as if ‘understanding one another’ was the only way of being in the world. The agreement is what is important, not the norms in themselves. The ideal of normalization is complete understanding, not knowledge (Dean 2010, 141).

— From a feminist point of view there is something paradoxical in the need to be seen. Normalization of the male/masculinity has for a long time been seen as a patriarchal power strategy that has meant that the feminist position has become to demand visibility of that which is silenced and made invisible. To be seen is to exist, to gain affirmation, and to belong. At the same time, audit culture has made clear that what is built into visibility also makes you a countable unit. The individualized subject of neo-liberalism must be able to appear to be whatever a particular workplace wants, in whatever way the workplace deems will maximize its productivity (Davies 2011). Everything the researcher does must be set out in the light, measured, analysed, and evaluated. You are forced to make yourself seen, and at the same moment you are reduced to a unit that is measured and examined, and thereby risks being judged (unmasked?), but not a part of it. The demand for visibility thereby risks rebounding in a fear of vulnerability that can have a paralysing effect.

— But what if I can’t? Each individualized subject feels impelled to maximize his or her own advantage within this threatening and constrictive order of things. In this way, neo-liberalism heightens individual competition by actively increasing individual vulnerability (Davies 2011). But what is the most frightening—the risk of being outside or of being included? *If I wasn’t forced to?*

## **The fear of becoming an affect alien—a sticky killjoy**

The seminar continues and she has just asked for the floor. This just has to be said. Her heart starts beating fast—she’ll soon have the floor. She writes small notes in the form of memory bubbles on her paper, needs support not to forget the vital parts, go off on a tangent... Her heart beats faster. What are they talking about now? She can’t listen; has to concentrate on what she herself has to say—as soon as it’s her turn. Suddenly she feels completely empty—why can’t she just stay quiet? Why must she always ... No, it has to be said—but how should she put it across? She’s sweating—feels the colour in her face rising, it’s her turn soon. But why? She takes the floor although she knows—she’ll never be able to express herself as well as they can! (Memory 4)

— *She’ll soon have the floor*, but the question is, can the floor be *hers*? Fear takes hold of her body, makes her heart pump faster, blood flowing to her face. Julia Kristeva

speaks about the female position in a linguistic sense as an exile position. The predominant culture and language—not least the institutional academic language, not least in a neo-liberal figure culture—is masculine/male; it is the language of scientific rationalism, a general, legal relationship with the world. She describes the female position in language as a language at the limit, a listening, questioning, seeking language that can only be heard in the rhythm, melody, the space in between. This language has been colonized by the legal relationship, and sends away the woman who does not allow herself to be colonized in exile (Hörnström 1994). Woman has therefore never been terribly good at the global language—his master's voice—even if she has learned to slide along with it, even quite successfully. However, sooner or later the indignation takes over and she loses her balance, does not keep to the agenda, forgets herself and trips up, has an outburst, stutters (Hörnström 1994, 15). Does she have to be like him to be accepted, seen?

— Probably. Or we could also ask, Which 'him' does she need to be like? This loss of balance, having an outburst, stuttering ... could it not be caused by a fear of other subordinate positions too?

— I read this memory as a strong urge to speak out, to say what has to be said, but at the same time there's a fear before doing so. If I read the memory again, but consistently replace some of the words—*The seminar continues and he has just asked for the floor. This just has to be said. His heart starts beating fast—he'll soon have the floor*—how does the text work now? Does it even seem odd?

— Again, from a more general point of view, the text could be about the importance and danger of being visible, or too visible. About not speaking their language and the (im)possibility of resistance, about the relationship with being implicated in that which one opposes. Not only as in the risk for failure, but also in the paradoxical sense of the danger of succeeding. Perhaps she cannot stand on the floor—or perhaps she cannot stand the floor (see Jönsson & Rådström in this anthology).

— Fear has always been understood as an instrument of power; subjects have given up their freedom in order to be free from fear, and the promise of civil society is the elimination of fear. But fear has also been regarded as 'a sign of times' and I would rather see this fear as an effect of the process than its origin. Becoming visible, finding a voice, also means losing oneself, losing one's voice.

## Epilogue

The memories discussed here are examples of how neo-liberalism is upheld by a regime of fear. Still, after reading these memories of fear and commenting on them in our email exchanges, we have come to ask ourselves just why we started our memory work with a predetermined feeling? Why didn't we just ask, *What does neo-liberalism feel like?* or *What are the feelings of neo-liberalism?* Why did we choose



fear, and only fear, since other emotions and ambivalent feelings towards neo-liberalism also came to the fore in our discussion.

One answer might be that it is our theoretical point of departure, a consequence of the fact that we have long worked with concepts such as normalization, discipline, governmentality, the production and risk of outsiderhood, and so on. This research focus perhaps does not leave place for the ambivalence or the openings we also can experience in neo-liberal discourses and practices, and for the opportunities and 'rooms of our own' they can create for us as feminist researchers (see Fahlgren, Giritli Nygren, and Sjöstedt Landén forthcoming)

However, there might also be another answer: a kind of blind spot in us. Much like melancholy changes character depending on society's shifting class and gender orders, so can fear (Johannison 2009). There is something interesting in the repetition of the fears that make the 'I' visible in our memories; something that has to do not only with gender but with class and privilege, and their preservation. We believe they may say something about how the Swedish middle classes attempt to self-perpetuate in a wider perspective, and we as a part of that middle class. It is increasingly common today for the problems (and fears) of the middle classes to be highlighted: how to choose where their children should go to school, welfare in old age, debt, and so forth. Is it the middle-class position that most of all feels threatened and obsessed by outsiderhood's precariousness, 'at risk' (Rose 1996)? Perhaps neo-liberalism articulates the middle classes through their problems rather than their privileges? Perhaps it is the case that the way in which the middle classes are done in our memories is driven by a fear of sliding down the social ladder rather than concern at the effort to climb upwards? This is also in line with what Ahmed (2004, 12) writes: the emotions move us into line with power and can attach us to orientations that oppress others.

Finally, there is a common thread in all these memories: the fear not of the other but of oneself, or rather the one that one risks becoming. Abjection in relation to ourselves, or a contempt for our weaknesses. This confirms Bronwyn Davies' description (2011) of the ways in which the extreme individualism of neo-liberalism is upheld in a regime of fear: 'Individualized egos must be defended at all costs, since they are intensely aware of their potential demise. Every threat to the survival of the ego creates a wound, and the wounded ego seeks, ever more avidly, confirmation of its survivability.'

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## CHAPTER 8

### STILL ‘FEELING LIKE A FRAUD’? REVISITING PEGGY MCINTOSH’S CRITIQUE OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS CULTURE THIRTY YEARS LATER

*Maria Jönsson and Anna Rådström*

A lack of self-esteem is bad both for the health and for bold thinking.

The quotation comes from an article in the Swedish trade union magazine *Universitetsläraren* (‘University Teacher’) (Skarsgård 2013a). A group of postgraduate research students in philosophy had been interviewed about academics’ feelings of inadequacy and fraudulence, and especially amongst younger researchers. The tone in the interview is confiding, and somewhat excitable, with the subject played up as being both shameful and taboo. A sense of relief is expressed within the group when they listen to one another; relief that their feelings are shared, and that it is possible to overcome them. There is something optimistic about this interview. The students are full of hope about the possibility of finding ways of dealing with these negative emotions. They talk about their careers as something that will happen—as a certain hope. At the same time, the interview leaves questions unanswered. In a short commentary published alongside the interview, the magazine asked us to reflect on the interview (Skarsgård 2013b). We duly did, but still many of the questions echo within us. Why did these students feel like frauds in the first place? Why is that feeling considered so dangerous, so shameful, and why is it necessary to overcome it?

As feminists who have worked in Swedish academe, with all its Anglo-American influences, for quite some time now, reading the interview and pondering the questions it leaves hanging, it is impossible for us not to think of Peggy McIntosh’s ‘Feeling Like a Fraud’ (1985).<sup>30</sup> In this ‘old’ article, published thirty years ago, she dissects the feeling of fraudulence within academia and other public spheres in the US. She does so from a social, feminist point of view, and detects an intimidating

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<sup>30</sup> McIntosh is an American feminist, anti-racist activist, and academic. She has done a great deal of work on inclusion and exclusion in academia, in progressive pedagogy, and in education. Privilege is one of her main themes: the importance of raising awareness of the workings of power and informal privilege, and the importance of self-reflexion for political change. She is perhaps best known for her article ‘Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack of White Privilege’ from 1989.

pyramidal, hierarchical, authoritarian power structure that produces the feeling of being a fraud. McIntosh takes what she calls a 'double look' at this phenomenon, and suggests on the one hand 'that we mustn't let the world make us feel like frauds', and on the other that 'we must keep alive in ourselves that sense of fraudulence which sometimes overtakes us in public spaces' (1985, 2). The feeling of fraudulence is thus something to avoid and to embrace at the same time. Feeling like a fraud does not necessarily mean that you are one; rather it may signal that you are seeking a way to avoid dishonesty.

It is interesting (and to our minds also a bit discouraging) to note that in contrast to the critical approach McIntosh expressed three decades ago, the postgraduate students in the interview from 2013 do not address the socio-political structures that produce feelings of fraudulence, but instead seem confident that the feeling of fraudulence can and should be overcome with time. The goal seems to be to (re-)win the position of a confident, self-reliant researcher. The students express relief that they can share the emotion—it is important to realize that 'everyone' sometimes feel inadequate as a researcher—but the ambition is to shed such feelings and realize that one is as good as anyone else. These students do not ask themselves what it means to be a 'good' researcher in the first place (at least, not in the interview), or if there *is* such a thing as excellent research. The neo-liberal rhetoric of success and failure, excellence and mediocrity, winners and losers remains unquestioned.

This observation is not a critique of those involved in the interview (which is short and has no time for nuances), but it raises the question whether this public and politically charged language has become so dominant that it mutes other ways of speaking? The interview was published in a trade union magazine—a journal that should voice teachers' and students' perspectives on academia today. Is it not strange that the answers given to questions of fraudulence are so spontaneously articulated in the individualistic and therapeutic terms of self-help? McIntosh questioned this sort of neo-liberal rhetoric thirty years ago, a few years into the Thatcher and Reagan era, when the whole restructuring of the universities and welfare state had only just begun. One may ask if it is not even more urgent to denaturalize this language today, thirty years of neo-liberalism later? McIntosh's thoughts on this are useful when, say, dealing with the turn towards new public management in academia and the ongoing introduction of more and more competition, rankings, measurability, standardization and regulation (see Griffin 2013).

'Feeling Like a Fraud'—one of the gems in the archive of feminist critical thinking—is described as a 'work in progress'. McIntosh, who is still active in the

field, has revisited the subject of fraudulence since. In two subsequent articles, she develops her topic by addressing feelings of authenticity in conflicts and in writing practices (McIntosh 1989; 2000). However, we have chosen to stay with her first piece of progressive writing, where she opens up the concept of fraudulence in unexpected ways. It is this article that initially helped us and many other feminists in the Eighties to see that feeling like a fraud can be a sane reaction, signalling that one has not completely internalized the demands of self-sufficiency, sovereignty, and over-achievement that prevail in the hierarchical university world. What has happened to these insights along the way? In the following we will highlight and discuss some of the points that McIntosh makes, and relate them to our everyday work as researchers in the field of gender studies.

### **Apology as critique**

The reader enters McIntosh's text by way of a series of apologies:

...I just wanted to say  
...I have just one point to make  
...I never thought of this before, but...  
...I really don't know what I am talking about, but here goes! (McIntosh 1985, 1)

Do you recognize these apologies? Have you used them yourself—or have you been advised not to use them? McIntosh lists the phrases when recapitulating her recent experiences from a conference on women's leadership in higher education. At this conference, seventeen women, all leaders, one after the other began their talks with an apology. Yet, all of them had been invited as speakers because they were assumed to know what they were talking about. They were standing at the podium as seemingly successful individuals. On one level, the scene described comes across as provocative, and one quick feminist response to the apologists is that they better stop that sort of behaviour as it reinforces the stereotype of the incapable female leader. They should own the stage; they should assert their positions. But then, on second thoughts, assert what positions? Their positions as all-knowing authorities? How does that rhyme with feminist practice?

Like McIntosh, we are struck by the number of apologetic women at the conference. Seventeen is a lot, and as the apologies are all delivered within the same public space one may wonder if there is an underlying 'strategy' of some kind? McIntosh notes that the speakers 'seemed to share a feeling of illegitimacy' when giving speeches to audiences of women similar to themselves (McIntosh 1985, 1).<sup>31</sup> The notion of feeling illegitimate in public situations, connected to prestige, competition, hierarchies, and power, conjures up the psychoanalyst Joan

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<sup>31</sup> As McIntosh uses the pronoun 'we', it seems that she was one of the speakers.

Riviere's article 'Womanliness as a Masquerade' from the late 1920s. In it, Riviere described a structure in which professional women unconsciously downplayed themselves in public situations situated outside traditional female territories, solely in order to diminish the risk of being punished for trespassing on (white) patriarchal land. As a defence against being found out as possessors of masculinity they wore a mask of (emphasized or exaggerated) womanliness. Riviere's text offers an interesting narrative. One of the examples she gives is that of a bright female 'university lecturer in an abstruse subject which seldom attracts women' (Riviere 1929, 39). This woman dresses in an exaggeratedly feminine manner, and on top of it she jokes and acts frivolously when lecturing in front of her (presumably all-male) colleagues, leading her to 'treat the situation of displaying her masculinity to men as a "game", as something *not real*, as a "joke"' (Riviere 1929, 39). Her unconscious strategy is not a success. Her colleagues reportedly consider her behaviour improper and annoying. They dismiss her. She fails. She seems to come across as bit of a flirt, and flirting is risky business if you are not the one controlling the situation.<sup>32</sup> As this is a psychoanalytical analysis, castration of the father figure and various forms of sexuality (etcetera) feature large, but in the context of our text these aspects are immaterial. What is important to us is the idea of a 'strategy' when entering the public stage, the act of masking oneself in order to avoid retribution, and the ever-present risk of failure and being exposed as a fraud.

The audience at the conference attended by McIntosh in the Eighties was different from the audience who heard the 'frivolous' university lecturer in the Twenties, and the speakers did not engage in the masquerade described by Riviere. Certainly, the seventeen apologetic women were seeking a way to enter a public situation filled with expectations and demands, but rather than masking themselves, they performed an act of unmasking and thereby exposed their uncertainties and vulnerabilities. They were in a sense risking their credibility, their trustworthiness as leaders, as their apologies could have been taken as disclaimers distancing them from responsibility. They could have come across as failed leaders, but would that have meant that they had failed in all possible ways? Or could failure—the inability or reluctance to meet certain demands and do certain things in a success-oriented culture—also be considered an act of resistance as recently suggested by Judith Halberstam (2011)?<sup>33</sup> McIntosh concludes that if seventeen women known as

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<sup>32</sup> Riviere's analysis, based on her psychoanalytical therapeutic practice, has been criticized, but has also been adopted and turned into a powerful postmodern theory of feminist/queer subversion built on repetition and exaggeration.

<sup>33</sup> In her book Halberstam does not address Riviere's ideas, but the example of the joking university lecturer can be discussed in relation to her notion of the terms 'serious' and 'rigorous' as code words for disciplinary correctness in academia and elsewhere. According

'leaders' choose to apologize, we should listen and consider what they are doing in the process.

In the world of winners, standing at a podium is synonymous with *knowing*. One simply does not apologize. McIntosh's initial response to the women's choice of words was that they were 'testimonies to women's incompetence'. And, as she points out, this *is* also the world's judgement on them. But then she began to listen to them in another way. Assuming that women *are* competent, she heard a message behind the apologies. And the message was not that they could not stand *behind* the podium: the message was that they could not *stand* the podium. The point of their apologies was to try to find a form of public speaking that mean they did not have to be so fraudulent (McIntosh 1985, 4).

Ambivalent about their power, these women leaders were entering the public space in a tentative way. As McIntosh notes, they were open to engaging in conversation and, unknowingly, entering into a relation with others by so doing. To *converse* with an audience is something else than *speaking* to it. The conversationalist is open to the others' perspective, always ready to respond and reformulate. The importance of this observation is crucial, and resonates with contemporary queer theory on the ethics of vulnerability (see, for example, Butler 2005; Halberstam 2011; Ann Cvetkovich, 2012). For instance, Halberstam—writing thirty years after McIntosh—argues that conversation 'rather than mastery indeed seems to offer one very concrete way of being in relation to another form of being and knowing without seeking to measure that life modality by the standards that are external to it' (Halberstam 2011, 12). In conversation, you are expected to be on the same level as the one you are conversing with—you are involved, and cannot withdraw to the commanding high ground where you are in control. However, while McIntosh's thoughts on conversation appear to have their sisters within contemporary queer theory and theories of subjectivity, they seem to have little to do with our everyday performances as feminists and researchers in an academy that demands straight answers in facts and numbers and most of all in measurable results. But what would happen if, instead of embracing self-promoting and all-knowing speech acts, we were to hold on to our impulses to apologize for our shortcomings? Is it possible to articulate a language of failure within academia today, or is it suicidal behaviour?

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to Halberstam (2011, 6) these words indicate, 'a form of training and learning that confirms what is already known according to approved methods of knowing, but they do not allow for visionary insights or flights of fancy.' Perhaps the jokey lecturer was seeking other methods of knowing instead of trying to avoid retribution?

### **Imposter syndrome as a social diagnosis**

McIntosh writes about women feeling like frauds when ‘singled out for praise, press, publicity or promotion’ (1985, 1). She also brings in the ‘imposter syndrome’ that hits high-achieving women when they sense they are not a self-evident part of the environment—someone that has nestled her way in on false grounds, or ended up in a position just because ‘it happened’ that way. To feel like an imposter is to feel that one’s position is not the result of hard work, but of luck, chance, or even cheating. McIntosh observes that the higher women (and others) climb up the pyramidal power structure, the more praise they get—yet, the more hollow they are likely to feel (McIntosh 1985, 4). It just gets worse. Success does not vaccinate against negative emotions.

Feelings of being a fraud or an imposter tend to go hand in hand. In her article, McIntosh lists positive remarks that fail to get through to the person they are intended for, in this case students (who, if they continue, will feel more and more fraudulent and out of place):

The Admissions Committee made a mistake. I don’t belong here.  
I got an A on this paper. So he didn’t find me out.  
I got a B on this paper. So he found me out.  
I got a C on this paper. He really found me out. (McIntosh 1985, 2)

When feeling like a fraud you do not take words at face value; you always find ‘subtexts’. If someone says you have done a good work it means that that someone has merely failed to understand what a fraud you are. And of course, if there is a negative comment, this will immediately be taken as a sign of confirmation: yes, I am fraud, I have been found out, and there is no need to argue against the judgement. An academic who feels like a fraud necessarily leads a draining existence, because ‘subtexts’ are all too easy to find. These underlying messages are not necessarily the product of the individual’s poor self-esteem and paranoia, but rather of a structure that often lacks transparency, ongoing in spite of all the guiding documents it produces. What is the feminist response to this today? It is certainly not to explore the feelings of being a fraud and imposter. We are instead either likely to use methods of empowerment—strategies to collectively overcome feelings of inadequacy—or the neo-liberal language of cognitive therapy, where we are supposed to change the way we think about ourselves through constructive new habits. In either case, we do not hold on to our excuses. But perhaps we should?

### **Double vision: overcoming and not overcoming**

McIntosh describes a vertical success culture within the academy, a culture in which results and rankings are highly valued ingredients. This particular culture,



which may empower a few but clearly disempowers many, demands 'competitive strength' from those who it includes. One has to develop ways to navigate it if one wishes to avoid exclusion. McIntosh does not use the term 'cognitive therapy', but writes about 'assertiveness training', which by all means might make you feel better for a while on an individual level, but cannot hope to lead to a structural change. When training to become assertive, one may argue that one has as much competence as everyone else and therefore the same right to the podium. This argument, spelled out, runs: 'I may be a fraud, but I am *no more fraudulent than the next person*' (McIntosh 1985, 4 original emphasis). But, McIntosh asks, 'Is the next person fraudulent?' With this question, 'we', as she puts it, 'move into the territory where assertiveness training and speech workshops may be of no help.' The other person at the podium is likely to play a role where fraudulence and imposter behaviour come into play, but this has less to do with the individual than with the hierarchical system that encourages such role (McIntosh 1985, 4). These lines of thought activate McIntosh's previously mentioned 'double look', which may also be regarded as a strategy.

McIntosh argues that the feeling of fraudulence is a good one. It is a sign that something is wrong. To feel like a fraud could be seen as a person's acceptance of values connected to competition and prestige, but McIntosh's point is that this feeling could be understood as a refusal to identify with these values. We (please feel included!) should therefore work with two strategies at the same time.<sup>34</sup> One of the strategies is, of course, to deal with fraudulence and realize that it is not the individual who has a problem. We should not feel like frauds because the world should not make us feel that way. We need to confront the contexts that produce fraudulence. The other strategy is to affirm and embrace the feeling of fraudulence. The impulse to overcome bad feelings such as shame in favour of pride and self-confidence tends to serve a neo-liberal ideology. When we aim to overcome feelings of fraudulence and shame we run the risk of accepting the idea that there actually *are* such things as academic success, excellence, and intact sovereign research subjects. Instead, we should welcome the fact that we feel like frauds, since it reveals spaces of negotiation—spaces where we have not internalized a hierarchical value system, and the apologies we make are symptoms of resistance, not of adjustment. This strategy—described by McIntosh thirty years ago and elaborated on in her subsequent articles—seems to be of even greater importance today. Especially since it seems almost impossible to visualize how it should be carried out. There is no language for collective mobilization. McIntosh's ideas are expressed in a straightforward, almost *faux naïf*, tone that feels awkward to use

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<sup>34</sup> Regarding the problematic "we", see Naomi Scheman (2011, 155).

today—and this awkwardness is a warning sign that we should take seriously.<sup>35</sup> Has it become embarrassing to express the hope that we could change power structures—even locally?

### **The self-made subjects**

I came up from nothing, rags to riches, from pink booties to briefcase on Wall Street. I did it all myself. I knew what I wanted and I was self-reliant. You can be, too, if you set your sights high and don't let anything interfere; you can do anything you want. (McIntosh 1985, 6)

The researchers working on the Swedish research project 'Gender and Career in Academia' have found that traditional masculinities are losing ground as growing numbers of women position themselves in research; yet, equally, they have found that present pressures from a performative culture only strengthen the structures that work to the disadvantage of women and other groups not traditionally in power. Women tend to do the background work at departments—making sure that there is a good working environment, going to seminars, commenting on colleague's papers, washing up everyone's coffee mugs, doing more service work in general. The ideal of the excellent, high-performing researcher is a man dedicated to his career, putting his efforts straight into publication, not to relations at the workplace (see Öhrn & Lundahl 2013).<sup>36</sup>

The general view today is that women (or 'background workers' in general) should follow the example of these seemingly self-made men. They should leave the groundwork to someone else. But to follow McIntosh is to recognize that no researcher is self-made. We are all fashioned by our relationships, and we get our positions due to luck, to networks, to colour, gender, or class background. We stand on others' shoulders. Feeling like a fraud is a way of acknowledging this. If we follow McIntosh we should continue to do the reproductive work in academia, and we should celebrate it, underscore it, because that work is what keeps us all alive, outside and inside academia. Consider McIntosh's description of that competence:

the experiences of washing the dishes and patting the cat, and having talks with one's friends, and earning enough money to put the bread on the table, and getting

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<sup>35</sup> Halberstam 2011, 11–12, for example, addresses what Foucault called 'naive knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity' when arguing for a 'knowledge from below'. She sees 'the naïve' as part of a project which 'may lead to a different set of knowledge practices.'

<sup>36</sup> The construction of the ideal, excellent researcher are discussed by Petra Agnerwall, 'Vem blir excellent forskare', in Öhrn & Lundahl 2013.

the bread on the table, and washing the dishes, and loving those who cannot help us “get anywhere.”<sup>11</sup>“get anywhere’. (McIntosh 1985, 8)

There is a sophisticated naïvety and something very radical and acutely important in McIntosh’s defence of the horizontal practices and values. It may sound like reactionary essentialism or idealism, but we find these values, this work, to be highly political, necessary, and concrete. The world does not need more empowered, gung-ho men or women, self-confident and successful. The world needs more self-criticism, reflection, and hesitation. To feel like a fraud is to pay attention to the fact that I am not a self-made ‘man’, I am a product of luck, privilege, circumstance, and others’ hard work. This political stand is needed not only in academia. As McIntosh says:

We need that tentativeness in high places. We need it in the Pentagon, in the White House, and in makers of public policy. We need that conversation, that ability to listen, to have a non-rhetorical, a relational self to keep us from blowing ourselves up. (McIntosh 1985, 7)

This essentially pacifist line may seem hopelessly out of date. But we would argue that here McIntosh has much in common with recent queer and feminist work on vulnerability (by Judith Butler, Judith Halberstam, Ann Cvetkovich and others), and its search for an ethics grounded in a relational view of the subject. The differences are that McIntosh’s article addresses our everyday practices in academia in such a straightforward manner, it searches for concrete strategies and tools for change, and therefore also is somehow more uncomfortable.

### **The importance of canaries**

The universities of today are run like companies, demanding measurable results. The demands are growing, the results are weighed in ever finer scales. In the bright light of new public management, we count students, teaching hours, publications, research funding, citations, and on and on (Jönsson & Rådström 2013, 130–43). We are pinned down individually as teachers and researchers. At the same time we become isolated from one another—so much for collegiality, for being part of a collective or a profession. We answer directly to the head of department (who in Sweden these days no longer answers to a board of selected staff representatives, but to the university’s chancellor), and we negotiate rights and salary individually, keeping quiet if we win, keeping quiet if we lose. More and more, the individual is emphasized when it comes to critical structural analysis. If one does not promote oneself and compete, while hiding all second thoughts, one is likely to drop out or become an academic loser. It is easy to feel like a failure today. And if you are successful in the system, you are likely to feel like a fraud—because it is only a matter of time until they find out that you have

not published enough, or in the right places, or generally done what you were supposed to do.

Today you are supposed to blow your own trumpet as a researcher or lecturer, or indeed just as a human being. We have gone from a culture of relative modesty to a hard-core 'bragging culture'. We have gone from praise to self-praise, and we make sure to construct impressive CVs, websites, or Facebook pages as proof of our success. We learn all sorts of success strategies. Career-planning, making our teaching portfolios look impressive, managing our Internet profiles, presenting our excellent research (before we have done it) at conferences (making sure to mention that we have external funding and exactly which prestigious source it comes from) and so on. What happens to everyone who still feels like a fraud and imposter? What happens with all those who cannot or will not use the strategy handbook? Are they under threat of becoming an extinct academic species? Will they be forced to leave or will they leave even before being forced to? (Some are perhaps leaving already.) And when they do leave, what happens to all the knowledge that disappears with them? Can the academic system really afford such a loss? No, it cannot, and this for very practical reasons. McIntosh writes about the 'canary bird test', in which the birds were used to detect carbon monoxide in coalmines. The frauds, women or men, are perhaps our best canaries, because when 'they begin to keel over, we know we are really in trouble—that the air around them does not have enough life-sustaining oxygen' (1985, 7). In other words, we will all suffocate.

The rhetoric of success, of winners and losers, is not 'only rhetoric'. This language is powerful; it shapes how we think about ourselves and act towards one another. The first time we talk about ourselves in these terms we may feel embarrassed, or like frauds. But what about the third time? We would find ourselves in cognitive behaviour therapy, collectively. We would learn how to repeat the behaviour that makes us feel awkward so many times that we no longer feel the discomfort. The twentieth time I use the word 'senior lecturer' or 'excellence' about myself I may actually believe that there is something to the terms. To feel like a fraud is in that sense to be a dysfunctional part of the academy—but in another sense it is also a sign that you are still alive.

We have now decided (however encouraging or well-intentioned we may feel) to never say to a colleague who makes excuses or apologizes for her performance that she should not apologize, or say that the apology takes focus or authority from what is being said. Instead, we will remind ourselves that we are faced with a canary, and that we should listen carefully. If we cannot listen to a person who apologizes or expresses insecurity without becoming impatient, we really are in

trouble. What is an inability to listen but a contempt for weakness? McIntosh should have the final word:

Until we see the authoritative forms *as forms*, we will continue to deny those parts of ourselves that have no words, that don't come in paragraphs and chapters and footnotes; we will be forced to deny the woolgatherer, the conversationalists, the imaginer, the lover of women and lower caste men, the one who likes people and joins with them without necessarily 'achieving' anything. The world of neighbourhoods and of human communities is the world of survival. If the public world becomes more honest, it may help us invent a form of podium behind which honest people don't have to apologize for their connectedness to others. (McIntosh 1986, 9)

## Postscript

'That's easy for you to say!' is a common response when we have presented these ideas in different academic contexts (McIntosh met a similar reaction twenty-five years ago).<sup>37</sup> The fact that we are two so-called 'senior lecturers' who have a lot of research time built into our contracts, and thus can be considered privileged by the system, seems to be a problem when it comes to critique of the very same system. Of course we are privileged. But is that a reason not to criticize? Is it easier for the postgraduate student to raise her voice? When is the 'right' time or place for self-criticism within academia? Is it ever time?

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<sup>37</sup> For McIntosh's reply to this comment see her article from 1989.

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## CHAPTER 9

### FEELING LIKE A FRAUD: A JOYFUL RE-MEETING AT THE MÖBIUS CROSSROADS

*Peggy McIntosh*

I am delighted with the brilliant work Maria Jönsson and Anna Rådström have done in bringing my work on feeling like a fraud to the attention of readers of this anthology. Their paraphrases are absolutely accurate and their quotations beautifully chosen. I am sorry to read the authors' descriptions of the hard-edged value system of the Swedish academic world at the present time, for we in the US are suffering from exactly this problem, and I would have preferred to keep my always idealized versions of Sweden intact.

Still, it gratifies me that thirty years after its publication, the first 'Feeling Like a Fraud' paper is still seen as important work to scholars in the US and to these researchers in Sweden. Or rather, it is perhaps still seen as important work to those who always thought it was! For those who knew nothing of this analysis, it may shed light on the fraudulence of some of today's measures of academic excellence. But perhaps it will not, because today's extroverted and other-directed institutional roles and postures that are demanded of people in academic structures mitigate against scholars' acceptance of a theory that suggests their uncertainties may be the most honest, authentic, and promising parts of themselves.

I have been invited to comment on Jönsson and Rådström's essay, and am happy to do so. In the US we face the same winner/loser mentality in the leadership of most universities, reducing academic life to matters of measurement, appraisal, assessment, and perceived return on the institution's investment, while knowledge-making suffers from narrow ideas of what is worth studying and where knowledge is to be found. Jönsson, Rådström, and I all have alternative views that could bring better balance to institutions that claim to be in search of knowledge, for the betterment of human life. I will elaborate on a few points and draw connections to some of my other work about American problems seen through analyses of fraudulence: hierarchies in US education, and US socio-political myths that keep racism and white privilege in place.

I appreciate Jönsson and Rådström's style of writing, for it is straightforward and somewhat informal in tone. All of my writing is informal in tone, and it is usually understandable by those who may not have had a college education. I write this way as a matter of principle. It is a great pleasure to be able to write informally here for editors and authors who have, by their attention, validated my style and respected the new analytical frameworks I have described, while keeping the commitment to clarity and simplicity that my frameworks endorse. I feel that abstruse language is oppressive and exclusive, and is one of the current pathologies of 'higher' education in Europe and the US. In the context of this discussion of fraudulence, I want to express my feeling that abstruse language by scholars and researchers can be one of the indicators of fraudulence in the privileged academic world. Yet ironically, obscurity may be one of the academy's few protections against the measurers!

Seventeen women in a row sounded apologetic as they took the microphone at the conference I described in my first essay on 'Feeling Like a Fraud' (1985). I was particularly surprised by their tentativeness, because each of them was a college president, a dean, or the director of what the conference organizers considered to be a major national project of some kind. The conference was even entitled 'Women in Educational Leadership'. One reason why I was, at first, so provoked by the apparent hedging by these female speakers was that at some level I urgently wanted them to show, to demonstrate, their administrative competence and confidence. I thought to myself, angrily, 'Women, we will never make it into the boardrooms of the US unless we can stand at the podium and deliver the goods!' What turned me around and made me suspend my anger is that I remembered that I worked at a Center for Research on Women, where we are committed to putting women's experiences and perspectives at the centre of our research questions. So I asked myself what might happen if I gave these women the benefit of the doubt, as though they were making significant choices in the way they spoke. I asked, 'What are these women doing with their apologies?'

As Jönsson and Rådström realize, I decided the women's disclaimers were actually intuitive strategies for building and keeping a relationship with their listeners and with the complexity of their own experience. The openings 'I have just one thing to say' or 'I'm not sure of this but—' allow members of audiences to feel they need not be persuaded of anything. To open one's comments with 'You may not agree with this, but—' works against the tradition of rhetoric, in which the aim is to persuade someone else of your point of view, and to change their mind if they disagree with you. In this sense, rhetoric is violent. I realized that the women's 'You may not agree with this but—' is an anti-rhetorical strategy. It signals to the listeners, 'You exist; I exist. My aim is not to persuade you, and we can talk later.' I



realized that what these women leaders were doing with their disclaimers was strengthening the social fabric of the group before it could be torn by rhetoric; they were doing with one another the lateral, relational work described by Jean Baker Miller in her 1976 book *Toward a New Psychology of Women*. I went from feeling impatiently—‘Women, we need to stand at the podium and deliver the goods’—to seeing that we were making connective moves, despite the high position that the podium and the amplified voice gave to each successive speaker. I decided that it is not that we cannot stand at the podium, but rather that we cannot stand the podium, a place that allows and encourages dominance. In our tentative and contingent ways of wording things, we were trying to connect with one another *before* the social fabric could be torn by rhetoric. So our apparent hedging had a pro-social and relational aim at odds with the universities’ traditions of knowledge-making as argumentation.

When I asked myself what makes women feel like frauds, I kept coming back again and again to what I concluded in that first paper. When a person, any person, climbs up a ladder into territory that has not been associated with people like themselves, they are likely to feel fraudulent by the standards of competence associated with a position in that dominant territory. Now, I wanted women to speak confidently, regardless of their level of power, yet I applauded their humility and resistance to being as sure of themselves as the top-down, individualistic holders of high positions have been. I kept feeling two apparently opposed things: ‘We mustn’t act as though we are frauds’ and ‘Aren’t we wise to feel like frauds in situations where anyone in the room might have as much to say?’ The key question for me came down to this: ‘Am I saying that feeling like a fraud is deplorable or that it is applaudable? Which side am I coming out on?’ I found I had to say ‘Both sides.’ At that point my analysis turned into a Möbius strip. When I give talks on the subject I make this geometric form, named for the German mathematician August Möbius, which looks like a one-sided, floppy number eight. I write on one side of a strip of paper ‘We must not let them make us feel like frauds’, and on the other ‘Let us continue to spot fraudulence in the public roles we are asked to play.’ I put the two ends of the strip together, twist once, and then tape the ends together. Now I have a one-sided strip that makes both statements. I can pull the strip toward me between a thumb and forefinger and I will cover both messages without changing sides. The Möbius strip makes one-ness of my plural and apparently opposite thoughts.

I believe that plural thinking is natural to us, and that anyone who is half awake in a twenty-first-century university uses plural thinking. I first explored this idea in my 1983 essay, ‘Interactive Phases of Curricular and Personal Re-Vision: A Feminist Perspective’. I feel I am in all five of the phases I described in that essay.

Feeling like a fraud relates to all of these phases, which are five frameworks for thinking, acting, and ascribing value. In phase one, the curriculum of school or college is a pinnacled affair that features men's achievements; it is uniformly white and womanless, and it does not acknowledge its exclusions. But it can make those who are excluded feel subtly or strongly like impostors in the school or university.

In phase two, one admits exceptional others who are seen as not like their kind and therefore worth studying. This phase is located a little below the tops of the pinnacles, and its honorees, though perhaps feeling tenuous because they are newly arrived themselves, see the ones below as defective variants of themselves who should stop complaining and bringing up 'issues'.

In phase three, down in the valleys, students, teachers, citizens get angry and ask who invented these de-oxygenated accounts of reality that leave out nearly everyone, and they ask who benefits from these accounts. Now they can teach or study all of the 'isms', the oppressors and the oppressed, the victimizers and the victims. Life is war, and nothing more. Yet the repetitive nature of the analyses and their recurrent winner/loser theme can seem a little fraudulent when set against the complexities of people's actual experiences, such as learning from so-called losers.

In phase four, below a geological fault line, the grain of the rock is lateral rather than vertical. This is the territory of experience rather than opinion. We all have our complex stories and all of our stories count. No one is only a victim or only an oppressor. We are all both. The making and mending of the daily fabric counts most. Up in phase one, we try to win, lest we lose. In phase four, we work for the decent survival of all, for therein lies our own best chance of survival.

Phase five balances the vertical competitiveness of phases one, two, and three with the lateral tendency to live in relation to one another and the rest of the world without trying to tear one another apart. Both vertical and lateral propensities are in all of us. In my country (I certainly cannot say anything about Sweden in this connection), the most disempowering and disabling feelings of fraudulence occur in people who have been born to low status of some kind and are not welcomed into the higher ranks of pay, promotion, press, praise, prizes, or prestige. In my country, low status may be especially threatening to self-esteem if one is born poor and as a person of colour. But just being born female in the US can do the damage. Internalized oppression, in which the victim of oppression punishes her or himself for not being 'right', 'good', 'smart', 'strong', 'competent', 'confident', or 'creative', is often accompanied by feeling like a fraud for trying to assert oneself at all in a public context.

I published two further essays on feeling like a fraud, one in 1989 and one in 2000. In the latter I tried to answer the question of how I know when I am feeling like a fraud: it is when I adopt an assertive and public self, by contrast with what I named the 'home self', which for me is conversational, relational, plural, intellectual, reflective, and maternal. In that phase four home self, I am family-oriented, informal, meditative, imaginative, and attuned to daily life and the daily cycles of the natural world. Yet I cannot rest in the home self yet; it does not contribute strongly enough, in my case, to social justice or social change, and it does not earn a living. I need the phase three muscles of heart and mind, class power, and rhetoric to help make the world I want to live in. In that third essay, I examined why I feel so fraudulent on coming into conflict, and acting within the resistance movements of phase three, or even standing up for myself. I concluded that I invariably found conflict too simple for my plural self. 'In a sense I am not up to the fray. But in another sense the fray is not up to me.'

My phase three self got up its nerve to write the typology of US myths that I will sketch out here. They take the feeling-like-a-fraud analysis beyond the critique of the knowledge-making system that I set out in my first fraud paper. They analyse fraudulence in the major white socio-political frameworks of the US. Did I feel like a fraud writing such a sweeping critique? Of course. But I decided that our prevailing race-coded myths themselves are so fraudulent that I would name and challenge them according to the second exhortation of the Möbius strip: 'Let us continue to spot fraudulence in the public roles we are asked to play.' Being an uncritical American, accepting our nation's most prevalent and white-oriented myths, is one of those 'fraudulent roles I have been asked to play', and I did not want to keep on playing. I titled this paper 'White people facing race; uncovering myths that keep racism in place'. All five of the myths reinforce the position of those who have the greatest privilege to begin with.

The *myth of meritocracy* has two parts. The first is that the unit of society is the individual; the second, that whatever you end up with must be what you individually wanted, worked for, earned, and deserved. This myth completely fails to recognize that there are systems of power, structures of advantage and disadvantage, which expand or limit freedom of action and choice. It implies that only individual talent and effort determine life outcomes. It promotes a feeling that all the doors of opportunity are open to all. It justifies a punitive attitude toward anyone who has not thrived.

The *myth of manifest destiny*, a doctrine of manifest destiny even, is that God intended white people to take over the whole of what is now the continental United States from the indigenous people who were living here. That same God

wanted the US to annex the Philippines, for the good of the people on those 7,107 islands. This myth uses God to justify American actions as a world power, feeling that the US sets a good example and has been called upon to take charge of other people's destinies. Thanks to this myth, whites do not have to allow it to seep into their moral or ethical awareness that we live on land taken from indigenous peoples, and whose cultures and physical existence white people attempted to destroy. The myth has excused many whites from seeing that white culture and colonialism rest on racial oppression in which whites are the wrongdoers.

The *myth of white racelessness* is that white people do not have race. Others have race, which we are led to believe makes problems for them, or for white people. We who are 'normal' are racially unmarked, and set the standard for what it is to be human. Within this myth, the participation of white people in creating systems of dominance or oppression is not seen as racial.

The *myth of monoculture* is idea that there is one American culture that we all experience in more or less the same way, and that anyone who is has trouble with American culture is not seeing accurately or behaving appropriately. This myth imposes a requirement on people of colour to see, feel, and behave like white people ('normal' people)—that is, they must assimilate into white culture. It assumes that they have nothing to lose by forsaking their cultures of origin, and a great deal to gain by fitting into the one 'normal' culture.

The *myth of white moral and managerial superiority* rests on the assumption that we white people run nearly everything because we can do it better than anyone else could. It reinforces the idea that it is natural for us to be in charge of the world and its affairs, for only very unusual persons of colour, unlike others of their kind, could be trusted to manage power anywhere. Through this myth whites internalize superiority and maintain white privilege and white supremacy in the worlds we control.

I feel that these five fraudulent myths are dangerous to the US. Though they are presented to many school and college students as truths, they in fact undermine the wisdom we need to acquire and acknowledge about how power, including our own, has worked in the world and in us. It is hard to challenge the myths because in the US citizens have not yet learned to think very systemically. I think Europeans got a head start in systemic thinking because of feudalism, the French Revolution, and Marxism. Most American elites are stuck in an ethos of individualistic capitalism, which makes seeing individuals easy and seeing systems much more difficult. I feel that, in my country, seeing both individuals and systems is nearly impossible, but it is our great conceptual need. We need it for

balance, and without it we will continue to labour under fraudulent myths about ourselves and about how our social systems work.

It seems that what the universities are doing both in Sweden and in the US might benefit from systemic analysis—along the lines of race, class, gender, and sexuality—of what the current value systems promote and reward. I feel there is a need for universities to respect and use precious resources such as the imagination and plural-mindedness of our humanity, which cannot be calibrated in mathematically based assessments of whether our liberal arts institutions are serving the common good.

I had to laugh when I saw how Jönsson and Rådström reminded us readers in several passages that in my original paper I had used ‘we’ sweepingly in places where it would have been more accurate to speak for myself. In their gracious and funny prose, thirty years later, they have pointed out that I would have done better to clamber down from that rhetorical and intellectual, first phase, top-down mode. I say cheers and thank you for such wonderful and respectful collegueship over the years.

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**From the youngest to the oldest**

## CHAPTER 10

### DEATH IN SWEDISH PICTURE BOOKS: GENDER, EMOTION AND INDIVIDUALISM

*Eva Söderberg*

An afternoon in a Swedish city in summer. The sun is shining and the weather is extraordinary hot. I am on holiday. All of a sudden, as I walk down the sunny street to get to the hotel, I see my reflection in a shop window. I also notice some odd red splodges that aren't part of me, and in order to get a clearer view I move closer and peer. It turns out that the red splodges are from a bright red evening gown in the shop, standing on a piece of white and shiny silk. With it is a red clutch, and behind, a background of pictures showing another red evening gown, a red urn-like object, and a pair of red high heels.

What is this place?

I peer again and try to get closer without touching the window. Is it a clothes shop or an upmarket second-hand shop? No ... there are too few things even for an exclusive boutique. Is it a shop selling party clothes and special occasion dresses? No, it all feels too neat and sterile.

My eyes wander over the bright red objects and it feels almost awkward, this impression of a sparkling New Year's Eve in the middle of summer. I really try to understand why the objects are there. It is so obvious this is a shop window—but what is the owner of the business actually marketing? Then I notice that on the right side of the white wallpaper in the background is a huge lipstick kiss, placed in something that looks like a death announcement in a newspaper, but enlarged. I focus on the words underneath the kiss.

Yes! I'm right.

I find all the usual information in a death announcement, but here and there formulated in a slightly different way. The lipstick kiss, coral red, is where the crucifix usually is, and underneath, instead of the information about how the dead person is related to those who had put the death announcement in the newspaper, I could read the words: 'I kiss you all!' And after that come the date and place of death and some lines of verse both beginning and ending with the English words 'I am what I am'. The last bit—the invitation to the funeral—is what surprises me the most:

Welcome to my last party!  
The funeral will take place  
In St Gertrude's Chapel  
Dress code: Pink with red lips.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> The author's translation from the Swedish: 'Välkommen på mitt sista party! | Begravningen äger rum | i St: Gertruds kapell | Klädsel: Rosa med röda läppar.' All quotations in this essay are the author's own.



From the death announcement, it is obvious that the dead woman has invited the guests herself. The urn-like object is not only something that looks a lot like an urn—it actually *is* an urn. I raise my eyes and become aware of the words in big black letters, earlier hidden by the reflections from the street: ‘A celebration of life’. They were followed by the words ‘*Bon vivant*’. These keywords were surrounded by pictures of more items: a cake stand of cupcakes; a coffin painted cerise and trimmed with sparkling ornaments and angel wings; and, finally, there is a huge cork. Probably from a bottle of champagne.

A death announcement, an urn, a coffin ... Despite all the vivid colours and party trimmings it slowly but surely dawns on me. The shop I’m facing is nothing less than a funeral parlour, a realization that is soon confirmed by the logotype for the Swedish Funeral Directors’ Association. But the logotype is followed by some words in English, ‘Never ending story’, and my curiosity grows as I move on to the other windows. There are what I assume to be death announcements, urns, coffins, and other objects dedicated to different types of personalities. The female ‘*Bon vivant*’ has a male counterpart with a red bow tie, a top hat, a brandy glass, a black death announcement, a black coffin, and a greeting from his men’s club.

Here is an ‘athlete’ as well, a young golfer surrounded both by golf shoes and high-heel shoes. My attention is drawn to the symbol in her death announcement: some grass, a tee, and a golf ball. Instead of some lines from hymn or a poem there is the hope that the grass ‘will be even greener on the other side’. The coffin is white, the memorial service is going to be held in a golf club—dress code ‘something checked’. Another funeral arrangement, dedicated to the ‘Music lover’. Different instruments, records, other typical things, and, in the death announcement, an electric guitar and a statement: ‘You rock all the way’.

As I stood there in the broad sunlight, I was thinking of the distance to the undertaking business that had been passed down through my family in the twentieth century. Here there was only a small black sign with gold lettering that announced it was an undertakers, and the large windows overlooking the street were full of objects that had nothing to do with funerals, such as art, ceramics, and crystal, some of which was also sold inside. In the funeral parlour from my childhood, all the urns and tiny models of coffins were hidden behind a thick curtain in a room where the only window overlooked the backyard and an old, empty orchard. No one had a reason to walk past during the day. But here, on the contrary, people were going past continuously and everything was on show.

The feeling that struck me that fine summer’s day was mixed. On the one hand, I was elated because of what at first sight seemed to be such a flagrant breach of the accepted formalities regarding death and funerals. What I saw in those windows made me think of the multi-coloured ceremonies arranged to celebrate people who had died from AIDS in the Eighties, as a reaction against the fact that homosexuals were sometimes forced back into the closet after their deaths (Svensson 2013). At the same time, it reminded me of archaeological grave goods—clothing, jewellery, food—but also of the death motifs in some picture books. Very often picture-book

illustrators try to catch a childlike naivety in the face of death, combining a lot of imagination and artistic expression. In some of the picture books, objects, memories, and written pieces are actually arranged like in those windows. Objects related to a beloved grandfather or grandmother have to be included in rituals and ceremonies to make the whole concept of death more understandable, or at least tangible in some way.

On the other hand, I was disturbed. What advertising agency had got this account and decided to make such a joke of it, verbally as well as visually? What was the target group? How did those in charge think about gender, class, and ethnicity? If they thought at all? And the question that had struck me when I first came across the window now struck me again, but with a new force—what were the owners of the business *actually* marketing? Was it really about funeral concepts arranged for different personalities? Or did it have to do with different kinds of consumers?

I brought these questions to my ongoing study of the death motif in children's literature. In the study, I focus primarily on picture books, more precisely a corpus of some seventy picture books written in Swedish or translated from other Scandinavian languages, published in Sweden from the Sixties onwards. All the books are explorations of death, dying, and mourning where old and new ceremonies are described, mostly with children in mind. Inspired by Ann Cvetkovich's *An archive of feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Culture* (2003, 7), where she develops a queer approach to trauma, I use the same metaphor regarding this collection of children's books. I see them as an *archive of feelings*, where feelings are expressed both verbally and visually in many different and interesting ways. The dialogue between image and text, as well as the fact that the author's and the artist's temperaments are at work at the same time in the reading of a picture book, provide multiple levels of meanings. The picture book is multimodal; the 'real' picture-book text—the iconotext—is realized only when it is read and both text and images are considered. Thus, text and image can complement, expand, and even contradict each other (Hallberg 1982; Nikolajeva 2000; Scott & Nikolajeva 2006; Rhedin 2004; Becket 2012).

Furthermore, a picture book is aimed at two categories of readers, albeit not explicitly. In most cases, it is meant to be read aloud to small children, who are rapidly developing emotionally and intellectually, by an adult who has far more experience and a wider conceptual understanding. This may result in mixed messages and ambivalence. Furthermore, picture books find their expression between the two poles of pedagogy and fiction. The idea that a good educational text should be clear and unambiguous while fiction should offer multiple ways of

entry, layers, and possibilities of interpretation has directed picture-book creators in different ways. All of these things, combined with the fact that picture books have become increasingly aesthetically qualified, with innovative graphics and formats, make this literary category especially interesting to study when it comes to motifs of death.

In this essay, I will initially touch on the concept of death and the relationship between death and taboo. I then sketch the context in which these picture books were created, with examples of different types of books in the selection, and go on to chart why concepts such as gender, emotion, neo-liberalism, and individualism can be important to such an analysis. Finally, I will comment on the selection as a collection of crossover books, and point to further avenues of research.

### **Death in a Swedish context**

Death is a paradoxical and common condition of life, which awakens existential questions (Bauman 1994; Lundgren 2006). Is life, as was suggested in the windows I walked past, 'a never ending story' that will continue after death? What in that case might the 'afterlife' be like? Will we live on in another life on earth or in some other place? And is it possible that the way an '*bon vivant*', an '*athlete*', or a '*musician*' lives their lives affects their afterlife? Who will actually be rocking all the way on greener grass? Will there be any grass at all? Does the moment of death mean that our minds are wholly extinguished? That none of it will survive the end of our bodies? Does the 'never ending story' in that case refer to our bodies breaking up, but being part of the biological cycle of nature constantly turning into new life forms? Or does it mean that we live on in the work we have done, or in other people's memories that will live on, at least for a time, even after we are dead?

It is only human to ask such questions about death, to reflect on them. This is something we have tried to do down the ages, as is testified in pictures, myths, fairy-tales, and many other kinds of stories (Ariès 1978; Wenestam 1989). Most people will experience the death of a loved one, which also makes grief and mourning a shared experience. In spite of all this, death is often said to be a taboo subject (Bauman 1994). An Internet search for the words 'death' and 'taboo' (in Swedish) returns thousands of hits. It is apparent that discussions about death often concern the taboo associated with it.

In the literature about death there are examples aplenty of similar assumptions. 'Today, the subject of death is often taboo. We fear our own transience. Instead, we deport death to an attic chamber of the mind and double-lock the door': this from

the anthology *Att levandegöra döden* (2007, 7), in which the journalist Ingvar von Malmborg and the psychologist Thomas Silfving say that far too little has been written about the subject in recent years—‘Where are the great philosophical works, the novels, the movies, the artwork and the non-fiction books dealing with death, the moment of death, sorrow, and suffering?’ To their mind, death in our time has been relegated to mass culture, only affecting fictional characters which one can safely ignore. They claim that death in the twenty-first century is just as repressed as sexuality has ever been; it is a mammoth act of denial, a denial surrounded by a great deal of prejudice as well as a compact silence. ‘Why is it that we say so little about something that is inevitable?’ they ask.

The ethnologist Britta Lundgren is of a different opinion: because death and grief are common to all people, they are widely described and researched subjects. ‘Far from being silent or hidden phenomena in our everyday life and society, they permeate the popular representations in media such as film, television, and literature; they are in our memories and fears, and they are being dealt with by experts and laymen’, she writes in *Oväntad död—förväntad sorg* (2006, 12). She reminds us that death has been the subject of magazines articles, dissertations, scholarly essays and seminars, conferences, and networks (Gustavsson 2009) with research spanning everything from ‘the uttermost existential questions to death in its embodied, concrete materiality’ (Lundgren 2006, 12); and that sorrow and grief have been described, talked about, and analysed in the same way.

These two positions should not be pitted against each other, but rather put side by side, for they are two poles, two equally ‘true’ statements, in a discursive field filled with tension. Death and grief elicit both denial and silence. Undoubtedly, urbanization, secularization, and the striking segregation of the generations have left many people distanced from real death, which in turn has become more and more institutionalized, unknown, and frightening. At the same time, our preoccupation with death is plain, over and over again in many different contexts. Some people today, in Sweden just as in other countries, seem almost to be caught up in a civil action to reclaim death and grief: a questioning of the institutionalization of care and dying; a discussion about the concept of death itself, about euthanasia, and about the right to choose your own rituals when it comes to dying, death announcements, obituaries, and funerals (Möller 2011; Wallander & Danneman 2014).

Such a reclaiming is undoubtedly the way to respond to taboos, the invisibility of death, and the imperative to be happy in today’s society. It can also be seen as a reaction against old rituals. Since 2000, the Church of Sweden is not a state church

any more, but, according to the law, it is still responsible for all funerals, and everyone, regardless their religion, has to pay a special funeral tax to the Church (Sveriges Riksdag 1990); the Church, in turn, has to provide taxpayers who belong to other religions or are atheists with a venue without Christian symbols. The fact that more and more people are leaving the Church and trying to find ways of arranging funerals outside the Christian ceremonies, just as the Church has to be more open and accommodating in order not to lose members, has led to a change. Music, lyrics, and rituals do not always have to be from the canon, or even particularly spiritual. Obituaries and gravestones display a creativity today which would have been impossible just a few years ago. There are artists who specialize in manufacturing personal—and fun—headstones. It are even examples of evening classes in carpentry where you can build your own coffin, fitted out to be used as something else until it is finally needed, a present-day *memento mori* (Joelsson 2008; Möller 2011; Hemström 2013).

Tragic events and disasters, in Scandinavia and further afield, have contributed to the increased importance of ritual and the new forms of collective grief (Svensson 2009). Equally, the Internet has opened up new possibilities. People blog about death and grief; there are groups for the bereaved; and there are virtual memorials online and even websites for stillborn children with photographs, stories, and links to other ‘angel child’ websites. You can read the innermost thoughts of someone who is terminally ill, a poem written by a grieving parent, a freshly published blog by someone who has witnessed a fatal accident and a plethora of articles, reviews, and essays that deal with death and grief. And, of course, you can also participate in games where death is an important function, and click to see torture and execution scenes whose authenticity is alluring (Johannisson 2008).

Changes in relation to death, dying, and mourning practices can be seen as a reaction to old customs and partly a result of a digital development. Yet, as I will argue, it is also important to see these changes in the light of a shifting policy context. Many of the phenomena mentioned have developed in more neo-liberal times, with their stress on autonomy, personal responsibility, and choice (Dean 2009; Rose 1998, 1999). For example, a coffin is something that is not only supposed to subtly correspond to someone’s social status, it can also be the result of an active act of responsibility, deliberately chosen to fit the personality and interests the deceased wanted to communicate during his or her lifetime—and still wants to emphasize after death. Thus a coffin can serve as a lifestyle product. ‘Lifestyle’ is actually the word used on the webpage where a series of coffins and urns developed jointly by the Swedish Funeral Directors’ Association (SBF) and a coffin company is presented (Sveriges Begravningsbyråers Förbund 2014). ‘For a large

number of people are interest in seas and lakes not only a hobby', they state, 'but also a lifestyle.' The coffin 'Ocean' is supposed to suit them, with its 'a maritime flair', its deep blue colour, hemp rope, and nautical symbols reminiscent of the sea. For those who during their lifetime were fonder of nature and the great outdoors, there is the 'Skogsro' coffin adorned with forest fauna.

It dawned on me that a special collection of coffins was what I had been pondering in the undertaker's window that summer's day: 'Never ending story'. 'Everything has a beginning—and an end' it said, suggesting that it could also be the other way around: that the end could also be a beginning, and that when we die we move on to something else. According to 'Never ending story' there might be 'a reason to approach a funeral a little differently'. Both neo-liberal ideology and commercial undertones are intertwined in the presentation of the concept:

With the concept of *Never Ending Story*, we want to highlight something more than a definitive end to our lives. We want first to show that in life we dared to be exactly what we wanted to be. That, after hopefully a long and glorious life, we ended the same way we lived. In our own way.

Who are the 'we' here? People who want to control their own death and legacy? People who have successfully made the right choices during their lives and will now have a successful afterlife—unless they leave this final, crucial choice to someone else, of course. A glorious life is obviously thought the result of personal actions and investments, attainable for any and everyone who can pluck up courage. The coffin—the 'angel box'—is the final acknowledgement that 'we' have been prosperous neo-liberal subjects with agency and power to shape their life—and death.

The SBF concept of the 'Never ending story' encompasses not only the coffin, but also a specially developed life archive, urns, floral arrangements, tombstones, and newspaper announcements. Furthermore, the various coffins are both class and gender coded and stereotyped. A contradiction is thus built into the concept from the very start. How can a prefabricated series catering to a limited range of lifestyles pretend to be unique? As it says in the presentation, 'In our own way', the SBF has the answer. They have noticed the trend to start planning for death earlier and earlier in life, with people having increasingly 'precise ideas' about the funeral ceremony, what music to play, what decorations to use, and so on. According to the SBF they encounter this trend daily, and therefore they will 'continually develop products and services that make it easier for all who dare and want to add a more personal touch to the funeral.'

Personal expressions in mourning and funerals, and everything that encompasses, can turn into imperatives that enforce even more individualized practices. This is

how to mourn properly! The deceased has to be presented as an original, not as a copy. One example is the symbols in newspaper death announcements. An analysis shows that the number of crucifixes fell markedly, from nearly 100 per cent in 1976 to 39 per cent of announcements in 1995, and only 32 per cent in urban newspapers. Symbols increasingly used during the same period time birds, flowers, boats, and nature scenes, as well as symbols of careers and hobbies—a trend that seems to have exploded in the last couple of years (Dahlgren 2000). One explanation, suggests Dahlgren, is the wish to emphasize the individual, because, as he puts it, ‘no one wants to be anonymous’. Among the symbols you will find tractors, sticky buns, a winking pig, and a skeleton waving goodbye. As death announcements have the newspapers for the digital world, our imagination, according to Dahlgren, is only limited by what might be possible in future (Ölund 2012). Nevertheless, it must be more and more difficult to find symbols and expressions that have not been used before.

Other examples are the many memorial sites with flowers, stones, crucifixes, and toys at the roadside where someone has died in a traffic accident. At the end of Eighties the practice was rare; nowadays it is the rule rather than the exception (Nordström & Hemström 2013). Something that used to be a spontaneous act can thus turn into something that is almost obligatory. Another parallel is the practice of decorating a child’s grave (Haag 2013). How many angels, white stones with messages on them, teddy bears, and hearts are needed to express the uniqueness of the child and the parent’s love? How does the parent feel who cannot, will not, bow to such demands?

However, in the midst of this carefully orchestrated grief—in newspapers and churchyards, at the roadside, in digital contexts—in the midst of this exposure, fictionalization, and straining after uniqueness, there is also repression, silence, and awkwardness (Bauman 1992, 12; Lundgren 2006). How should I treat a dying person? How do I approach the relatives of the person who is dying? What about my own death? Perhaps I cannot even bear to think about that.

Images of death, as well as tradition and the old and new rituals developed to serve it, are multi-faced and fraught with tension and contradiction. Contrasts meet—closeness and distance, global and private, technological and intimate, awkward and competent, quiet and exposed. Death has an absolute biological materiality, but equally well is a phenomenon with psychological, mental, and spiritual implications that generates innumerable questions.

## Death in children's literature

Different ways of thinking about death, by the time they are expressed in fiction, have often been shaped much earlier in human history, and can be found in various religious and philosophical traditions of thought (Ireton 2007). When Von Malmborg and Silfving (2007) write that they would like to see philosophical works, novels, artworks, and non-fiction that deal with death, dying, grief, and suffering, they do not mention children's literature. Children's literature, unlike general literature, it is a relatively young literary category, but one which constitutes a forum where existential questions have long been elucidated and discussed. Motifs of death and grief exist in all children's genres from picture books for the very young, via non-fiction, to children's and young adult books, which in some cases have been adapted as films. It is against the wider context described above—a context signified by continuity as well as change, opposition, and tension—that the motif of death in children's literature should be seen, and not only as a reflection.

The way children's literature has grappled with the motif of death has varied in intensity over the years. In older children's books, characterized by a Christian view and designed to foster a religious person, death had its natural place and was sometimes even described as desirable, even for children. Children's deaths became something of a revivalist motif in nineteenth-century Sunday school literature: there was often a pale, bedridden family member waiting for death, the liberator. For Christians, resurrection and the promise of eternal life were the goal (Ørvig 1985; Gibson & Zaidman 1991). In the literature of the 1920s and 1930s, mentions of disease and death no longer came naturally. From the first World War onwards, there are signs that this kind of literature became less common in the Western publishing world. Not until the 1960s did the motif of death reappeared, and since 2000 the children's literature nominated for Sweden's prestigious August Prize often deals with death.

Adults and children may discuss death when coming across the subject in children's books; however, portraying death within the bounds of a picture book aimed at preschoolers is still a challenge. There are many ways of thinking about death, and prospective readers may for the first time be faced with the existential questions posed by the thought of death. In *Barn, död och sorg* (1990, 'Children, death, and grief'), the children's psychologist Sis Foster argues that the adult concept of death is incomprehensible to children all the way up to teenage, and that lack of experience makes it hard for them to gain any emotional understanding.



## Death in picture books

In a partial study, I have examined the motif of death in about twenty Swedish children's books published between 1966 and 1990 (Söderberg 1995). The purpose was to see who dies in the books, how different ways of thinking about death are expressed, and how death is portrayed and, in some cases, explained. The results show that it is mostly older, male relatives and pets that die from natural causes, usually age-related. *Lasses farfar är död* (Eurelius & Lind 1972, 'Lasse's grandpa is dead'), *Lenas farfar är i himlen* (Sjöberg & Benson 1972, 'Lenas's grandpa is in heaven'), *Farfars Lajka* (Wahl & Nygren 1989, 'Grandpa's Laika') are some examples. Probably the purpose is to show, in the least frightening way, that death is a natural part of life: it happens to old people who are 'ready' and to animals that are old, sick, and suffering. The fact that mostly old men related to the young protagonist's father die can be understood from a gender perspective. The female body is often associated with giving birth and life-sustaining processes; the death of a woman thus goes against everything conceived of as 'natural'. No children die in Swedish picture books from these years, a lasting taboo, the sole exception to which can be found in a book about sudden infant death syndrome (Foster & Gissberg 1989).

What, then, is the message about death in these books? There are books with secular, Christian, generally religious, and philosophical messages—and books in which various messages are mixed. Furthermore, it is apparent that the number of books with more philosophical and ambiguous messages increased during this period, as did the fact that the role of the children in the books changed: no longer did they ask questions and receive answers, they were now the ones who had their own answers or who single-handedly worked to find the answers out. This may be seen as an expression of the discourse of 'the competent child' which, in its turn, should be understood in the context of neo-liberalism

One example of this is *Resan till Ugri-La-Brek* (Tidholm & Tidholm 1987, 'Journey to Ugri-La-Brek'), where two children play their way into understanding their grandfather's death. On the manifest level, the journey is to a kind of land of death—where mostly old people and their pets live—while on a symbolic level their repetitive play portrays an inner journey, a quest for understanding to cope with the loss. The children use their imaginations and the dispersed and fragmentary messages they receive from the grown-up world about death. They also use their nascent cultural competence to read their neighbourhood and discover vague contours of mythical patterns. There is, for example, a river to cross. Theirs is a quest that is culturally framed, but at the same time is genuinely personal.

A deeper analysis of the relationship between images and text, the iconotext of this material, shows that there is collaboration between text and images as counterpoints and expanded relationships. In picture books where death is portrayed as something final, illustrators experiment with something that I refer to as *life markers*. These may nuance or contradict the message at the manifest level. In *Lasses farfar är död* (Eurelius & Lind 1972), the only colour except black and white is blue, which reinforces the talk of blue flowers emerging from the earth which the grandfather's body has turned into. Above the dead dog in *Hunden Sture blir gammal* (Ingves 1985, 'Sture the dog is getting old'), the reader can see a bird flying past the window, carrying nest-building materials. Behind Sture are pots with green shoots—probably from the bulbs which we have seen on the book cover. The book *Farfars Lajka* (Wahl & Nygren 1989) tells us how Lajka the dog turns into dust, but in one illustration where the dog is sitting surrounded by darkness, a sliver of light slips through the upper edge of the image and seems to shine onto the dog. These life markers can be seen in books where the author and the illustrator are different people and when they are one and the same.

In Swedish picture books about death published from 1990 onwards, pets continue to dominate among the dead—*Lina, Gulan och kärleken* (Lundgren & Hald 2003, 'Lina, Gulan, and love'), *Rufus i Underjorden* (Mellgren 2010, 'Rufus in the Underworld'), and *Godnatt, min katt* (Skugge & Digman 2012, 'Goodnight, cat')—as do older, male relatives—*Vi tänker på dig, farfar!* (Wagelin-Challis & Garhamn 2007, 'Thinking of you, grandpa!') and *Den finaste skatten* (Hedman 2012, 'The greatest treasure'). But in the material there are also a few older, female relatives among the deceased. In *När mormor glömde att hon var död* (Karlsson & Bengtsson 2001, 'When granny forgot she was dead'), the ghost motif is twisted in a fun and psychologically interesting way when grandma forgets she is dead. In *När pappas farmor dog* (Farzaneh & Gårdsäter 2013, 'When Dad's granny died') a father and his little son visit the great-grandmother's house after she has died. In the books from this period we also find examples of life markers, for instance the great, sun-like dandelions which lie around the dead guinea pig in *Adjö, herr Muffin* (Nilsson & Tidholm 2002, 'Farewell, Mr Muffin'). On the last page of the book we can see Mr Muffin hastening toward a setting—or rising—sun in the distance.

In the 2000s it has become more common for parents and children to die in picture books. Among these books there are also many examples of the border between life and death becoming tenuous and fragmentary. In *Ängeln Gunnar dimper ner* (Lindgren & Ramel 2000, 'Gunnar the Angel takes a tumble'), the eponymous angel brings dead people back to life. They literally come back from the grave—and there is no sign that this is merely temporary. In *När jag besökte himlen* (Stark 2003, 'When I visited heaven'), the adult Ulf visits his dead aged parents in heaven

to see how they are doing. The drowned boy in *Pojken i havet: En berättelse* (Magntorn & Rosiin 2007, 'The boy in the sea: a story') watches the world of the living from his new kingdom, and in *Jag känner en ängel* (Svensson 2010, 'I know an angel'), a dead father continues to be there for his daughter—only now he has wings.

In these books, too, life markers are essential. In *Jon har ett svart hål i sitt röda hjärta* (Rottböll & Virke 2013, 'Jon has a black hole in his red heart'), the boy asks his mother if his father can climb down the tall trees to get back from heaven. His mother says no. 'Daddy will never come back. Not even in a thousand years.' The answer is very definitive, but in the picture accompanying the text you can see the tall trees rising up in the sky, the feet of mother and son in the hammock attached to one of the trees and—which is significant—the mother's toenails painted red, but her son's painted alternately red and green. He is a mixture of two complementary colours. And on one of his toes a big, beautiful butterfly is sitting with its wings outspread. The butterfly is not mentioned in the text, so here the iconotext is essential to grasp the possible meaning. Butterflies as well as birds are frequent in picture books about death—they send a message about transcendence and a movement between different spheres.

To write about a dead parent in a picture book is to tackle a very sensitive subject. In *Jon har ett svart hål i sitt röda hjärta* (2013), the 'black hole' of the title in Jon's 'red heart' is actually illustrated in the book; a book that addresses many aspects of grief and mourning, using images to deepen the emotional message and get nearer a psychological truth. Other books from the same period have different purposes. Some of them mix humour, a sense of play, and the materiality of death, for instance in a picture-book parody intended for a preschool readership, *Titta Max grav!* (Lindgren & Eriksson 1991, 'Sam's grave'), and the unsentimental parody of the non-fiction genre, *Dödenboken* (Stalfelt 1999, *The Death Book*) and *Mysteriet döden* (Lindström 2010 'Death, the mystery'). When an encyclopaedic ambition and humorous illustrations collide with such a serious subject as death, the comic effect becomes obvious. Under the guise of writing a factual book, you can step round all taboos or skewer them with a sparkle in your eye.

### **Swedish translations of Scandinavian picture books**

The idea that Sweden was early to break the taboo about death in children's literature is only part of the story, however. In a Scandinavian context, books from Denmark, Finland, and Norway were in some cases well ahead of Sweden and served as a source of inspiration. The Danish photographic picture book *Mor, var är de döda?* (Leunbach & Bellander 1964, 'Mum, where are the dead?') was important

when it was published, because until then it was considered very difficult to deal with the subject of death in books for small children.

It is the question of the ontology of death—about what death might mean to the person who is dying—that is discussed in *Mor, var är de döda?* This is closely linked to questions concerning the surviving relatives. How are their lives affected by the death? What are their feelings and expressions of grief like? How do they process grief? According to Dessislava Stoeva-Holm (2002), emotions, ‘as followers of our thoughts and actions, affect our interpretation of the world and helps orient us in the now’. We are sometimes ready to show others these feelings or to put words to them and discuss them, she says. Researchers such as Ekman and Friesen (1975) have shown that there appears to be a two-rule social system: ‘feeling rules’ for inner feelings and ‘display rules’ for expressed emotions. The pictures in picture books are used to show expressed emotion, yes, but also the inner feelings.

When it comes to the surviving relatives’ feelings about death, and the expression they find, a Finnish-Swedish picture book led the way. In Sweden, the book *Lasses farfar är död* (Eurelius & Lind 1972) was criticized for frightening children with an illustration where the boy Lasse’s father is sitting on the floor, crying and grieving. The fact that it was a grown man who was shown crying was probably one of the reasons (Söderberg 1995). There was even an ‘anti-book’ with what was supposed to be a less frightening and more religious portrayal of the same motif, *Lenas farfar är i himlen* (Sjöberg & Benson 1972). After this, it seemed that no one in Sweden dared to show grieving parents. In *Ängelungen* (Thun & af Enehjelm, 1990, ‘Angel kid’), again from Finland, powerfully expressive pictures are used to show the pervasive expressions of sorrow by parents, an older sister, and even the pet gerbil when the younger brother in the family has died. The parents seem to cling to each other in desperation and love. Their tears, and the red hearts which also flow from them, are the size of their hands and the whole picture is full of colour. This book showed that bolder illustrations were possible.

A picture book from Norway, *Farväl, Rune* (Kaldhol & Øyen 1986, ‘Goodbye Rune’), shows a child’s sorrow when her friend has died, expressed in a face with tearful eyes and with an poetic realism unmatched in Swedish publications. In *Änglakatten* (Sandemose 1995, ‘Angel cat’), also from Norway, the inner emotions are portrayed with strong, psychological realism, but in symbolic pictures. In one of these, the main character is sitting in the middle of the gigantic empty space which her large cat has quite literally left. The empty space has a cat’s contours. In the Norwegian *Roy* (Dahle & Nyhus 2009, ‘Roy’), in which a dog dies, the pictures as well as the grieving boy’s feelings are portrayed in the images. This can be seen in the colour scale of the book, which is done in nuances of grey, and in all the

details which show, as parallels, the way the dog had been part of the main character's life since he was born, and the boy's ideas about death, which stem from different people's stories about it.

Today it is mostly Denmark, where a kind of art rebellion seems to be taking place among picture-book artists, that delivers new motifs and aesthetics in picture books about death (Rhedin 2009). Among others we find the book *Idiot* (Oskar K. & Karrebaeck 2009), in which an old mother takes her own life and helps her mentally challenged son to die. Oskar K., the author, has also created a picture book in which the existential anxiety and thoughts of foetuses are portrayed, but it has not been translated into Swedish (Rhedin 2009).

In other cases, the Scandinavian connection is apparent. The Finnish-Swedish book *Linnéa och änglarna* (Sundström & Bondestam 2003, 'Linnéa and the angels') and the Danish *Jättebra Olga!* (Gjerding & Helfer 2010, 'Well done, Olga!') and *Annas himmel* (Hole 2013, 'Anna's heaven') are all about life after the death of a mother, and in all three there are references to Astrid Lindgren's books about the strong and independent Pippi Longstocking, in the shape of red hair, pigtails, or mismatched stockings. In Sweden this motif is still very rare, and one of the first picture books in which a mother died appeared only very recently: *Dom som är kvar* (Saler & Ahmed Backström 2014, 'Those left behind'). Both text and images speak volumes about what grief and mourning can be: to cry, to fall silent, to stay in bed watching television, to sit at the table staring at nothing, to talk incessantly with different people, to squabble, or to break something and get hurt. The message of the book is clear: it is important to take the chance to talk about a life with affection, to talk about death, and, equally, to be silent. It is essential to learn how to cope with the fact that the dead are dead, and that those who are alive are alive. In *Dom som är kvar*, the picture of the nuclear family remains intact even after the death of the mother, as the father, his two sons, their grandmother, and a black dog stand close together in front of her gravestone. As they leave the graveyard, the youngest son points out a bird in the sky, flying in their direction.

## Concluding Reflexions

The way death, sorrow, and mourning are dealt with in picture books published in Sweden in the last fifty years has obviously changed. The picture-book artists adjusted to old patterns and motifs, but they also continued to challenge literary taboos. Not longer was it only pets and grandparents who died; down the years fathers, sisters, and brothers have joined the list and, in the last decade, even mothers. Since 1990, funerals are more common in the books, and dead bodies have been much more in evidence, sometimes even being touched by the children. It is interesting to note that the boy in *Min pappa ville inte leva* (Runvik 1998, 'My dad doesn't want to live') does not want to caress his dead father's hand, while the girl in *Farmor och paradiset* (Hammar & Sandler 2005, 'Granny and Paradise') kisses her grandfather's cheek and finds that it smells from the porridge with cinnamon that he had for breakfast. The child's relation to death is on many levels getting more and more intimate.

Grief is also expressed in more varied ways, and as a matter that concerns both men and women, boys and girls. It is true that children's literature mirrors our society and its complexities, but it is not only a passive reflection; it is also part of a series of discourses that can influence the world outside books. Is it possible to see a more reciprocal connection between ritual and ceremony in these books, and indeed in a neo-liberal society where individualism is an avowed ideal? My answer would be yes, for reasons I will finish by detailing.

The picture books offer many examples of children trying to understand and come to terms with the death of a beloved pet or a family member. In that process, objects imbued with meaning are used, both in traditional religious ceremonies as well as in more private rituals developed through the children's play and conversations with other people. In *Vi tänker på dig, farfar!* (2007) the grandfather's worn slippers are placed by the coffin during the funeral service, and the slippers are important in the children's picture of the rocket that, in their minds, will take their grandpa to heaven. After the funeral the slippers help the children get close to him. In *Mormors sjal* (Lind & Hellgren 2014, 'Granny's shawl'), two cousins decorate their grandmother's grave with small white stones they have been collecting for most of their lives. The white stones make a circle on the ground that echoes a number of red balls in the air on the previous spread. A discussion about life and death has taken an associative step towards questions about jugglers. How can they keep all the balls in the air at once, the two girls wonder. One possible subtext here is about gravity and transcendence. The big black shawl of the title, decorated with red roses, offers the girls a place to hide—and reflect. With two dots over the letter A in *Mormors sjal* you have *Mormors själ*—'Granny's soul'.

Another example of how a child tries to come to terms with death is when the girl and her grandmother in *Farmor och paradiset* (2005) finally find a place they can call 'Grandpa's Paradise'. In a beautiful clearing by the sea they find the very spot where grandmother and grandfather had first met, a paradise with birds, flowers and trees. On top of a stone the girl places a pink flower and grandpa's spare hearing aid—he'll need it in Paradise—and the grandmother adds some coins, in case he wants to take the bus back to visit them some day.

Neither the girl in *Farmor och paradiset* nor the children in *Vi tänker på dig, farfar!* are dressed in black. The girl in *Mitt svarta liv* (Eriksson 2007, 'My black life'), on the contrary, is wearing her black-and-white pirate costume and a black eye patch for the funeral service where the rest of the congregation is dressed in traditional black or dark blue. You missed a real party, she tells her grandfather when she gets home from the service. Her enjoying the fun part of it, and insisting on doing it 'her way', would sit well with the 'Never ending story' approach described at the beginning of this essay. It in turn was probably influenced by children's traditional and yet broad-minded views about the rituals and ceremonies of death. It is perfectly acceptable to dress up in a pirate costume; any object can represent the deceased person. Yet, interestingly, mourning, memorial services, and death ceremonies in children's picture books present a broader, more heterogenic and complex picture than do the different stereotypes promoted by the Swedish Funeral Directors' Association and the various coffin manufacturers.

The symbols and life markers found the picture books discussed in this essay can often be interpreted as the result of an active and imaginative child's quest for understanding. They do not speak directly to lifestyle or personal statements of belief. The accounts of death and mourning in picture books are often more creative and artistic, and afforded a greater philosophical and existential scope, than those designed for adults. There is also every reason to ask to what extent the objects such as the tractors, dogs, and dancing couples included in death announcements make the deceased special and unique? Are they even capable of embodying someone's entire personality and interests? The objects in picture books are often chosen to correspond to a child's perspective—but nevertheless they seem to open up a space around the deceased, and such books on the whole provide multiple levels of meaning.

Sandra Beckett suggests in *Crossover Picturebooks* (2012) that 'the picturebook genre' should be situated in the broad international phenomenon that is crossover literature. I would argue that picture books about death and dying often do have these crossover qualities, and can be just as rewarding for adults to read. Some of

them may well help adult readers see what has been normalized in society when it comes to death, dying, and mourning.

In my project I will continue to analyse the way the creators of picture books balance the metaphysical and the phenomenological in their discussion of death, using complex text-image interplay, metafictional discourse, genre-blending, and intertextuality. I will enlarge the analysis of emotions and from a gender perspective examine how a chaotic cluster of strong and primitive emotions such as anger, loss, despair, regret, and guilt are expressed within the iconotext. I will also examine the ways different kinds of memory work are used within the books' universe. Finally, I will focus on the Scandinavian connection in these kinds of books and analyse how symbols are used differently across the full range of Swedish picture books about death.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> In a recently published anthology about the Nordic countries, the term 'hard' is used about the Nordic countries (Björkman et al. 2011), meaning the five Nordic countries themselves, but also a 'soft' North, an ideological and medial construction which, among other things, is about equality, trust, inclusion, and love of nature. In what ways are these things expressed in picture books about death?



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## CHAPTER 11

### **'FUN' AS A RESOURCE IN OLD WOMEN'S DELIBERATIONS ABOUT STYLE AND DRESS**

*Karin Lövgren*

This essay deals with how old women aged between 62 and 94, during wardrobe interviews talked about a specific dimension of their style preferences—the notion of fun. The article is part of ongoing research.<sup>40</sup> The purpose of this research is to explore cultural meanings of ageing. The wardrobes and their contents guided the interviews, with their garments as material prompts that invited talk about life transitions that had impacted on their choice of dress, on changes in their everyday lives pertaining to ageing—retiring or taking care of the grandchildren, for instance—and on bodily changes such as weight gain or increasing stiffness or immobility. Several of the women kept garment even though they no longer used them. Among different reasons for this, emotional ones were that the women could not let go of old garments associated with so many memories (see Lövgren forthcoming) Their sartorial biographies thus reflected their whole lives, not only their thoughts and experiences of ageing.<sup>41</sup> The informants, whilst going over their garments, described their style. One of the self-categorizations frequently referred to in the interviews is the subject of the present essay: the notion of fun.<sup>42</sup>

When describing their thinking about dress or when looking at specific items of clothing, several women used the word 'fun' to highlight what for them were important aspect of dress, foremost in terms of aesthetics and a specific style. My informants used the word fun mainly in two ways. One was to describe how it could be fun to take an interest in what to wear and in fashion, and the pleasure to be had from possessing a new garment and looking forward to wearing it. Fun in this sense was used to convey the sheer pleasure of aesthetics and in getting dressed, with the word used to convey positive emotions. However, the word mainly featured when different pieces of clothing were shown to me, with comments such as 'This is a fun blouse', 'I like clothes that are fun', or 'Here's a fun

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<sup>40</sup> The research will be reported in articles focusing on different aspects of the empirical material.

<sup>41</sup> In another article wardrobe collections have been analysed; the article is to be submitted for review.

<sup>42</sup> The women also talked of comfortable, sporty, leisurely, every day, and pedestrian when discussing style preferences. Comfortable is analysed in a forthcoming article (Lövgren forthcoming).

pair of shoes'. Sometimes informants just said 'This is another fun piece of clothing'. At first I was surprised and a bit thrown by this phrasing. What did the informants mean by 'fun'? How can this notion be understood?

In Swedish there are two different words that translate into the English 'fun'. One is *roligt*, which means fun in the sense of 'enjoyable', the other is *kul*, or fun as in 'nice' or 'jolly'. *Kul* started as slang in the early twentieth century, when it was considered expressively charged, youthful language. Some attribute it to the era of late 1960's and to the boomer generation who were teenagers then (Brembeck 2010). Its connotations and stylistic nuance have since evolved over time. Today the word is integrated in everyday Swedish, used as a positive evaluative word (Kotsinas 2003). My informants used both words when describing the pleasure in their aesthetic work on dress, but only the latter word, *kul*, when talking of style, as in 'I love fun shoes'. *Kul* can be interpreted as more informal, even insubordinate, indicating a transgression against the norm. Both *roligt* and *kul* are emotive terms. Sophie Woodward (2007) found her informants had their wardrobes ordered in different forms, for instance according to social role, function, colour, or material, while some also had a special category of 'fun garments'—clothes for going out or special occasions. My informants used the term more broadly, not only for clothes for going out.

Laz (1998) emphasizes cultural meaning making of age, and how this cultural work makes age seem natural and evident. Culture is a toolbox, providing diverse images and resources for 'doing age'. These, together with macro social structures, impact on age-consciousness, expectations, behaviour and emotions. Bodies are a source of age awareness, not least when getting messages on age through others. The interpretations of these are contextual, cultural. Laz stresses that 'emotions function to transform available resources for acting one's age into the actual accomplishment of age.' (1998,103). 'Fun', as in pleasure associated with aesthetics or unique garments, is in this article understood as a strategic resource that my informants use to navigate acting age appropriately.

### **Research on fashion, dress and age**

Until recently there was a gap in research on older people and fashion or dress (Twigg 2007; Twigg 2013). This has been partially rectified with research on older women and dress, presented in a number of different publications. The fashion researcher Pamela Church Gibson, in an article on the invisibility of older women in the fashion system, has interviewed women over 50 (2000). Several of Laura Hurd Clarke's publications consider appearance and ageing: in an article co-authored with Meridith Griffin and Katherine Maliha (2009), she addresses ageing informants' perceptions of bodily change and different strategies to handle it using

dress; and in her book on women and ageing, *Facing Age* (2011), she includes a chapter on dress. Foremost in this field is Julia Twigg's pioneering work *Fashion and Age* (2013). Using interviews about ageing and dress, she gives dress biographies of three women who make conscious efforts to defy norms of how to dress when one is older. The book is also based on interviews with retailers and producers of fashion wear, and on analyses of mediated discourses on fashion and age. Another example of explicit attempts to defy age norms can be found in Holland (2004), who interviewed older women about ageing, more particularly those who dress in a subcultural and alternative style. The participants in her study found that it was harder to transgress norms of ageing than to challenge gender norms, showing how age norms permeate and interrelate with gendered ones.

Other important research in the field of dress and age is the work of Ingun Grimstad Klepp and Ardis Storm-Mathisen (2005, 2006), who found similar themes in their fieldwork on dress—Klepp when interviewing middle-aged women, and Storm-Mathisen when working amongst a group of teenagers. Their comparisons showed that different transitions in life were accompanied by differing norms of age-appropriate dress, but also by norms of body shape. What was considered appropriate at different stages of life differed in terms of reproductive and sexual roles. Another project that involved informants at different stages of life is 'If the shoe fits' (Hockey et al. 2012, 2014). Both men and women of different ages have participated in this study, using diaries, fieldwork, and interviews, with shoes as the point of entry to explore changes and life-course transitions.

Eileen Fairhurst's work (1998) on the concept of 'mutton dressed as lamb' has also been seminal, showing how women risk condemnation if they overstep the norms of appropriate dress (see also Holland 2004; Twigg 2013). In contemporary society, women have been positioned as interested in fashion and consumption, and as drawing more of their self-esteem and feelings of self-worth from appraisals of their appearance and looks—making them more vulnerable to bodily changes when ageing, not least since beauty has often been equated with youth (Clarke 2011; Twigg 2013). Women are subordinated in a gendered hierarchizing system that separates the sexes—and where older women have been doubly subjected due to sexism and ageism (Beauvoir 1976; Clarke 2011; Sontag 1972).

A gender perspective is important since it shows how differing norms, roles, and expectations are ascribed in terms of gender. Clothing is central in producing cultural meanings of femininity and masculinity, naturalizing a cultural order of separation of the sexes (Entwistle 2000: 142 ff.). Age and ageing intersect with gender, and also with class and ethnicity. Since dress is embodied, and ageing is an

embodied process (Twigg 2013), dress is a fruitful point of entry when studying how ageing and gender are given cultural meaning.

My essay is based on wardrobe interviews, using garments as prompts to talk about transitions, continuances, and, above all, ageing. Klepp and Bjerck (2012) give an overview of wardrobe interviews as method. Wardrobe interviews have been used by Sophie Woodward in *Why women wear what they wear* (2007). Her extensive fieldwork has focused on what she calls the 'wardrobe moment', when choosing what to wear for different occasions; her informants are mainly in their twenties and thirties, the oldest in her late fifties. Alison Guy and Maura Banim (2000, 2001) have also used wardrobe interviews as a method, interviewing women between the ages of 21 and 54. As this brief overview shows, there has been more research on women than on men, especially when it comes to research on fashion and clothing. Several studies investigating fashion and older women, meanwhile, have not included the elderly. The present study has an extended age range, in order to investigate similarities and differences in the category of old.<sup>43</sup>

Theoretically the study is part of a tradition focusing on social and cultural constructions: how the meaning of, in this case, ageing, is ascribed and described. The concept of *doing age* is used in parallel to how gender is done (West & Zimmerman 1987; West & Fenstermaker 1995; Calasanti & Slevin 2006). This theoretical concept captures that these are ongoing processes, incorporating both individual actors and institutions. Age is done, made relevant, in relation to norms and expectations of appropriate behaviour and style, but also to distributions of power and resources amongst different age categories (Twigg 2013). The focus on *doing* captures comparisons, contrasts, positioning, and negotiations of age (Lövgren 2009). Other theoretical concepts shed light on active meaning-making from age—Cheryl Laz's age as *accomplished* (1998) and Judith Butler's *performativity* (2006)—but I have chosen the more open *doing*, since this captures both individual and structural negotiations. The phrase may be grammatically awkward, but it is analytically fruitful.

### **Method and empirical material: wardrobe interviews**

In the wardrobe interviews on which this essay is based, informants (twenty-one women aged 62 to 94) showed me their wardrobes, drawers, and hanging spaces. The interviews were guided by the contents of the women's wardrobes, building

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<sup>43</sup> Whilst there are difficulties with having such a wide age range amongst the informants, there is also the possibility to explore age categorizations. This is the topic of another article.

up sartorial biographical narratives. We talked about style; choice of dress; changes in taste and preference during their lifetimes; and when each garment was worn—whether for special occasions or every day, whether for work or leisure. Biographical interviews were conducted with each informant. The women's life histories as well as current situations were included in the empirical material. The interviews were loosely structured, conversational in style, and steered by the informants, although there was a checklist to ensure that certain topics had been covered. The focus was on how informants described life-course transitions and growing old. Dress is a fruitful starting point, because wardrobe collections contain both garments no longer worn, testifying to previous dimensions of self as well as relations, and dress that is currently favoured. Clothing items acted as prompts, facilitating talk of transitions and continuities, of changes in role and body.

The women were invited to participate regardless of their perspective on fashion or style. Some informants declared an explicit interest in fashion as such, whereas most were concerned with what to wear and how to dress. For many, fashion became relevant mainly because it impacted on what was available to buy, or influenced what colours or cuts that were currently in fashion.

The women were recruited in a variety of ways: through personal connections, through a pensioners' organization and a church, through a group doing physiotherapy, and through a retailer that targets older consumers. The sampling strategy was to include informants of different ages in order to ensure that they were drawn from different cohorts and generations, the ambition being to investigate how ageing is talked about at different stages of life and to problematize the categorizations of old, older, and elderly. The oldest informants were born in the 1920s, and the youngest in the mid 1950s. The women came from different social backgrounds. The majority can be described as middle class. Some had a university education. Most had worked in occupations where a majority of employees were female, such as nursing, teaching, or administration. Some had been housewives when their children were small and had later got jobs on the open labour market. For several, their income had been comparatively low and they were now reliant on their partner's pension. Those with a partner had greater purchasing power. Some had a partner, others were divorced or widowed or not currently in a relationship. All the informants had children and several grandchildren. They all described themselves as heterosexual. Most were ethnic Swedes, with three who had backgrounds in other European countries. Some of the informants were in frail health; others had ailments they attributed to ageing.

The interviews revolved around dress and garments. These were kept in wardrobes often placed in the bedroom, an intimate area of their homes. Therefore



it was important to explain the research procedure and to make sure the informants had taken an informed decision to participate, and to that end they were given a letter to take home and read at leisure, after which they were to contact me if they wished to take part. Those who participated were interested in talking about and reflecting on themselves. Ethical rules of conduct on information and the right to discontinue participation were followed (Hermerén 2011). The informants have been anonymized and are here referred to by given-name pseudonyms.

The interviews were transcribed, together with detailed field notes. These were then read through several times and coded (Aspers 2007, 165–93; Lewins & Silver 2007, 81–90 on coding procedures). The codes have been formed both from theoretical concepts and the empirical material striving for reflexive interpretation (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008, 475–554). Recurring topics and themes, together with specific expressions, choices of words, body language, and tone of voice, have been assigned different codes. Software for qualitative research, Atlas ti, was used to keep track of the coding. The quotes cited in the essay have been translated from the Swedish.

### **Fun to dress up**

Some women said it was fun to have a new blouse waiting in the wardrobe, anticipating an occasion when they would wear it, thinking ahead of how they might appear to others. They savoured the moment even before it had happened, and talked with pride and enjoyment of getting dressed up, wearing something not previously seen by those they were meeting. Compliments were an important factor in this, a testimony to having succeeded. Getting dressed with others in mind was one dimension. Alice, 94, described how she enjoyed dressing up for lunch at the nursing home where she lives. Moving to the home had the unexpected benefit of her outfits becoming new once again, since she had never worn them before in this setting. She talked with pleasure of the compliments she had from both staff and fellow residents. For her, putting effort and consideration into her choice of dress was a strategy to deal with old age.

Karin, 90, also talked about the importance of having something new to look forward to wearing: 'Just sitting here in old clothes, day in and day out, that wouldn't be much fun. No.' For her, change and renewal combatted stagnation. She explained that she sometimes debated with herself when buying new garments 'at my age', but felt it important to treat herself. Doing this meant looking to the future, which can be interpreted as a strategy in dealing with ageing. Fun was here used as the equivalent of enjoyment: to take pleasure in combining

outfits or choosing what to wear for different occasions. This was important for several of the informants.<sup>44</sup>

### **Fun garments**

In the following different aspects of garments that were referred to as fun will be examined. Colours, patterns, cut, shape, and details in design were all discussed. 'Fun' was used about a diverse range of garments to explain the sense in which they were nice, and especially frequently about clothes in bright colours, with the Swedish word *kul* used primarily about different items of clothing or footwear. When fun referred to colour, it was often in contrast to neutral colours—the blues, beiges, but mostly the black which some of the women preferred. Colours are ascribed different cultural meanings, changing with societal changes, reflecting both gender and age in the colours and colour combinations that are considered appropriate (Twigg 2013, 136–9). Old age has historically been associated with drab, muted colours (Twigg 2007, 293). Grove-White (2001, 195) points out that colours, together with style and fabric have been a structuring agent reinforcing conventional social and gender roles.

Black long had connotations of mourning and later became an artistic and fashionable colour, but now has become mainstream and prevalent (Craik 2009, 42–7). The colour black was often discussed during the interviews. Several of the women struggled with black, feeling restricted in choice of colours. They were used to black, had worn it for decades, thought garments in black were easy to combine, generally appropriate, and supposedly made one look slim. Issues of weight gain were important to several. Several described black as a safe bet, but boring. The women also pointed out that black dominated in what was on sale thus impacting on what to choose amongst. But black was also said to make the complexion appear washed-out: the contrast between skin tone and black made one look saggy and wrinkled; black was ageing, and should be avoided when older according to several informants, either talking from their own experience or referring to the media's style advice for the older woman. Judging from the interviews, black is a contested choice for older people.

Pink used to be a colour redolent of masculinity, but in contemporary society it has become associated with femininity and especially girls (Ambjörnsson 2011; Entwistle 2000:140), and as I will come back to, girlishness is a marker indicating transgressions of age-appropriate dress. Red has long had cultural connotations of flamboyant sexuality. The use of bright red is still associated with youth, and

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<sup>44</sup> The informants used both 'roligt' and 'kul' Swedish words for fun when talking of making aesthetic efforts.

wearing strong colours can be a deliberate, active protest as is the case with the Red Hat Society in the UK and US, where older women wear red and purple clothing and often elaborate hats at public occasions, defying age norms of drab colours for the elderly (Barrett et al. 2012; Yarnal et al. 2011). Twigg (2007, 302) describes how pale, drab colours and shapeless garments underwrite invisibility and thus point to social marginalization. Given this, there is a certain claim for visibility when it comes to the older women's use of garments in bright colours. Bold colours call for attention, breaking a taboo against visibility of older women.

When my informants spoke of fun and bright colours, however, it was not in terms of dressing up, as for the Red Hat Society's members. It was rather about garments in cotton or other natural fibres, in bright, attention-grabbing patterns or bold stripes in contrasting colours, and, crucially, designed for everyday use.

The expression 'happy colours' was much used in the informants' narratives. This could be blue, for example, which was said not to make skin look as pale as black did. Sofia, 82, pointed out her favourite garments, dwelling on a knitted jumper in pastel colours that always got her many compliments. 'Such fun colours,' she said. Fun can here be understood as happy and playful. For Sofia, colourful garments were also a contrast to the trouser suits she had favoured when working—the formal wear that, on retirement, she swapped for colourful clothing. Here fun has a playful dimension in contrast to work, calling to mind other style categorizations the women used, such as comfortable and leisurely (on comfort, see Lövgren forthcoming).

Twigg (2013) points out that colourful clothing is a common feature in garments for children and, in some cases, the older consumer. Bright colours in loose-fitting cuts facilitating mobility, prioritizing comfort—at both ends of the life cycle, this indicates play and leisure. However, it must be emphasized that the informants' chosen 'fun' garments bore no resemblance to children's dress; if anything, their age coding indicated middle-aged wearers or older.<sup>45</sup> There are claims that bright colour reflect a sense of optimism and is more prevalent in prosperous times (Thomasson 2014) and that strong bright colours express an outgoing personality (Grove-White 2001). Using 'happy' or 'fun' colours can be interpreted as a modest opposition to being seen as 'boring' (a common objection to black), and as a strategy to draw attention, to be taken into account.

The meaning ascribed to colours changes over time. This was evident in several ways in the interviews. In a longer perspective, informants used colours to explain

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<sup>45</sup> On age coding see Krekula (2009).

how attitudes to ageing had changed, using their mothers' approach to this in contrast to their own preference for strong colours:

Alice: My mother, she said, 'I can't wear red or light green because I am too old', and she was 54 you know! But that was then. Times have changed since then.  
Karin: Did you ever think like that about any colours?  
Alice: Nooo, I love colours. All kinds.

Wearing red and green, as Alice, 94, talks about, was according to her, in the 1950s off limits for an older woman. Another example of temporal changes in attitudes to colour was evident in the wardrobes of several of the women born in the 1940s. They had done a colour analysis, trying on shawls in different shades to determine whether or not cold or warm tones of different colours were most flattering. These style advice sessions were popular in the mid 1980s, and had made a lasting impression in their wardrobes as well as colour preferences.<sup>46</sup> Yet another example is the informants' references to what was in fashion that season, for several talked about trends as something they had to concede to, at least to some degree. One interpretation can be that if garments were too out of date, or in a colour currently not in fashion, their unfashionableness betrayed the wearer and risked her coming across as old. Expectations by the fashion system, and self-perceptions restricted the informants' choice of colours (also see Grove-White 2001).

### Unique and different

'Fun' was used as a generalizing epithet for a style preference, singling it out from a more pedestrian style or mass-market fashion. This can be understood in terms of resistance to inferred norms about how to dress when one is older. Astrid, 62, for instance, talked of her dress style as being different from others her age. At the time she was wearing an elegant tunic in bright colours and a pair of trousers by the Danish designer Masai, gathered in at the ankles with loose knots, a broad panel at the front and elastic at the back, the material a silk-like fabric. Astrid announced with gusto her love of fun clothes. Similarly, when Lena, 86, Astrid's senior by over twenty years, talked about style, she stressed fun and difference:

I look for slightly youngish fashion, but not that young, and perhaps a bit different. Like coming in one of these, with a top under is not that usual. So yes, I think I've always liked being... I haven't changed style that much, but I think I have become bolder, yes, I think so. I don't care as much what people think. So this one I haven't dared to use so often in public, but really, I look good in it I think. And worn with a pair of white trousers, I've used it in late summer. This is the type I like that's a bit different. [...] Yes, so I'm not afraid to be a bit different. [...] Not everyone in my age turns up in one of these, but I'm happy to [shows a tunic by the Swedish designer Gudrun Sjödén]. I wore this to church after the summer and I thought it looked good.

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<sup>46</sup> On colour analyses see Grove-White (2001).

Both Astrid and Lena described their preferred style as 'fun'. They wore clothes that they thought made them unique and different. The informants contrasted their style of dress to others of the same chronological age, emphasizing for instance that they dressed differently to most elderly people; what they perceived as unique, 'fun' garments were a strategy. This can be interpreted in the light of Simmel's theories of fashion as expressing the tension between fitting in and being a part of a community, driving uniformity and the contrasting desire to stand out and be different (Craik 2009; Crane 2000; Entwistle 2000). The informants said that it was important to dress correctly for the occasion, and some also expressed a wish to be distinctive.

For Lena, 86, with her interest in a youngish style, there seemed to be a certain equivalence between youth, difference, and fun. She felt that younger consumers have greater freedom as regards style: an older woman has to be consciously bold and brave. Her narrative forms a dialogue with herself where she takes different sides: announcing that she looks good in the outfit, she takes pleasure in feeling that she dresses differently to others her age, recognizing that her style is a continuation of wanting to stand out, but also that, being older, she is freer and cares less what others think of her appearance. In spite of this she admits that she has not dared wear the outfit in public, which can be seen as indicative of tacit norms as regards age-appropriate dress.

Fun was often used about small details. Elisabeth, 70, pointed out the smocking trim on a beige blouse, lovingly calling attention to the buttons, each a different shape. The garment was discreet, with the small details enhancing the look in a refined way—a 'fun' blouse, she said. Fun in the interviews was used referring to form, to how garments were cut, often with a loose fit, and sometimes with asymmetrical details. Comfort and style were often combined in designs that accommodated bodily changes such as increasing weight. The body is not exposed in this style of clothing; an asymmetrical cut takes attention away from the size and shape of its wearer; yet it is a distinct look, a design to be noticed.

Fun can be interpreted to refer to a style that is neither formal, nor strict or elegant, but instead, rather casual and leisurely, perhaps even sporty. Elisabeth, 70, described her style as romantic and sporty, linking style and comfort, another important categorization used by the informants when talking about their clothing preferences (Lövgren forthcoming).

I think that style is fun even though I am 70. So, well, maybe it is odd that... But nobody's said you can't wear that. So yeah, I am a little romantic I guess. [...] they are fairly expensive, but I like Danish clothes. That's fun fashion, I think.

Elisabeth's words tail away. Left hanging in the air is a sense that perhaps she should not prefer this style at her age. She tentatively wonders whether it might be seen as violating norms of age and style. She points out that nobody has explicitly admonished her for wearing the style she prefers. This is how age norms were often referred to: as something they were conscious of, but could not quite pin down: a tacit presence they were aware of, and to some degree had internalized.

The restraint with which most of the women talked about their style shows that there were ongoing deliberations about dress. They felt it important to dress correctly for the occasion—correctly in relation to how others present would be dressed, so that they would be visible in the desired way—while the fun came from a unique detail that was 'just right', showing the effort they had made and their pleasure in the aesthetics of their outfit. One interpretation of the phrase 'a fun garment' is that it is distancing, downplaying any pretensions and conveying the idea that style is not to be taken too seriously, and a certain distance from a concern with appearances is implied. Words used about style by the informants are unpretentious, unassuming, modest, and humble. Calling clothes fun can be understood as making moderate claims, much like the Swedish concept of *lagom* 'just right'. The very carefulness with which their style was described also testifies to the emotive character of dress—a relationship difficult to pin down in words. Garments 'feel good', 'feel right', 'look nice': vague phrases with which to formulate a relationship between inner feelings, occasion, and appearance. Also important in understanding of people's emotional relationship with their clothes is the fact that this develops when using garments in different contexts. As Woodward points out, 'women's attachment to particular items is an embodied relationship of wearing' (2007, 32–3).

One interpretation of the concept 'fun' is that it is young, hip, trendy. The word is often used in this sense in fashion reports in the media. Should the fact that the informants use this concept be understood as their wanting to be seen as young, and thus as resisting ageing? This could be interpreted as making a strategic alliance with younger target groups, favouring fun fashion. One brand mentioned by several informants, the Spanish design label Desigual, describes its clothes not only as fun and different, but also as sexy, a concept otherwise not associated with the older woman, who is often constructed as being beyond sexuality and the erotic (Twigg 2013, 49–50). The company's 'For everybody' motto can be taken as indicating uni-age ambitions. It is notable that the words used by the informants to describe style preferences did not include sexy; instead they talked about 'looking nice' or 'feeling good'. Emphasizing 'fun' can in this light be understood as not making claims to an eroticized self (Twigg 2007, 2013).

### **Dressing one's age**

Several informants had collections of shoes they could no longer wear—some had astonishing numbers of pairs—which they described as beautiful or ‘fun’. Increasing age had brought difficulties with their balance or their feet, leaving shoes too narrow or heels too high to be worn. Several talked sadly of having to give up wearing high-heeled shoes; this was a transition where practicality and comfort had to be prioritized over what they thought of as beautiful. They talked with pride of having been able to walk or dance in heels—a display of femininity in a culturally prescribed fashion (Hockey et al. 2012, 2014; Woodward 2007, 140). Ways to display femininity become limited as one ages, both because culturally normative femininity is synonymous with youth, but also because of the bodily limitations that come with advancing years.

The informants often had a negative view of bodily changes that are natural and unavoidable, such as with age having looser skin on their arms, gaining weight, or changing body form. This can be described as having integrated a gaze of youth (Twigg 2004). Julia Twigg's concept refers to how the older body is subject to a cultural gaze, embodied in media imagery (2004: 65). She points out that women's signs of ageing subject them to harsher judgements since they derive social worth from their appearance and attractiveness, whereas men are judged by performance. Indeed, for men, signs of ageing can be interpreted as signs of maturity and authority. Women are subjected to restricting norms and regulations, leading them to internalize ageist views of their own bodies and themselves as ageing, seeing themselves as abject and in need of various strategies to hide signs of ageing (Clarke 2011). Older women become socially invisible. They are no longer reflected in media or in advertisements, except with messages about how to avoid signs of ageing (Lövgren 2009). Woodward (1999), like Twigg (2004), suggests that women become invisible as they age. The older female body is both invisible and no longer seen, and hypervisible—as in all that is seen are signs of ageing.

My informants positioned themselves as more privileged than previous generations. Having more consumer power, they are able to own more garments than their mothers could. They are not forced to take on a style that makes them feel old; instead, they are free to choose clothing that is colourful and bright. They talked of themselves as being freer from restrictions in terms of age. Yet they also described how they due to age had made different alterations and adaptations, in terms of what they wore. The women used different strategies to handle bodily changes, choosing clothes that did not expose their stomachs or arms.

However, they found it difficult to pin down norms of age appropriateness. This shows the elasticity of age: feeling old can be postponed or negotiated; how meaning of age is displaced, called upon or denied in various ways according to circumstance and situation. Age is talked of in a contradictory, ambivalent fashion, and not just in these interviews. Several informants expressed that with age they were freer from others' opinions—as Lena, 86, in the quote earlier, saying she care less what others thought of her style. Yet the opinion of others was referred to as a validation of their choice of dress. There were references to how a sister, daughter, or friend had approved or disapproved of their choice of clothing, to significant others who had encouraged them to wear certain items. Mirja, 64, was happy to defer to her sister's judgement: 'Sometimes my sister can say, "Oh nooo, you can't wear that, you look like an old lady." And then I trust her.' My informants spoke of how people close to them had told them to avoid wearing certain items of clothing that in their opinion made them look frumpish, outdated or even 'ancient'.

Several of the women talked about others, using them as a tool to explain their feelings about style in relation to age. It seemed easier to discuss age-appropriate style when talking about other people, especially when describing transgressions or failures to live up to this evasive concept. That others are used as examples when talking of this can be understood in the light of the anxiety about dress that Entwistle discusses (2000, 145). Failure is more readily exemplified with reference to others. Talking about norms of how to dress when older, several remarked on occasions when others had, in their opinion, failed and been shown up in public. Unknown others were used as deterring examples when describing how to dress and what to avoid. The informants spoke of seeing other women who had come across as 'pathetic', 'silly', or 'foolish' by dressing in an age-inappropriate manner. Others were used as object lessons in how to dress and what to avoid. Mirja, 64, gave an example:

In comes a woman. She's ten times more wrinkly than I am, and her skin's just sagging like this, and she's tanned, because she's always sunbathing, and she has dyed red hair, shoulder length, with curls, and a bow in her hair, and then she's got on the world's lowest-cut dress, tight-fitting, light summer blue, with flowers, short like this. And then I thought, 'O my god.' [Laughs] 'What world is she living in, does she think she looks like a little doll or what?' I mean, it was like this baby doll, a 70-year-old baby doll. No.

These were style failures ascribed to a lack of synchronization between their chronological age, as my informants saw it, and their clothing. Colour again figured large in this assessment: light blue was too girly, as of all the possible shades of blue it was the wrong nuance. In Mirja's eyes, the woman had denied her chronological age, her physical age, by dressing in a way that Mirja found more suitable for someone much younger. The lack of congruence between body and



dress is what made her look ridiculous in Mirja's eyes. Twigg discusses moral ordering of dress and how it impacts on older people. There is a threat of dereliction and decline; of inappropriateness of dress, for instance in excessive exposing of the body for the older person. This is reinforced by a contemporary view of the body as a project in need of discipline and beauty work (Twigg 2013: 16–17). More rarely others were talked of as role models—the sort of person who was slim and fit, having a bodily form that allowed them more freedom of choice in what to wear. Those who could afford more expensive designer garments, that had a better fit and were made from high-quality fabric, were spoken of with some envy.

Astrid, 62, found it difficult to assess others' ages. This can be understood as an indication of how difficult it is to estimate someone's age, and that the interpretation differs according to one's own age, but her remarks can also be interpreted as indicating the existence of a more uni-age style, open to all regardless of age. Age cannot readily be deduced from style of dress. However, Astrid also stressed the importance of looking grown-up, saying she could see others she thought should dress more maturely, and also saying of herself, 'I don't want to look like a little schoolgirl, with hair in pigtails. I want to look adult.'

The informants stressed the importance of dressing one's age; that it was essential to acknowledge that one is older in the sense of being grown-up or mature, of accepting one's age and the stage in life one had reached and not deny it. Marianne, 68, for example said she thought it was important to dress according to her age, leaving teenagers and young adults to their own style. There is and should be a difference according to age, she announced. One should neither dress frumpishly, in a way that makes one seem older, nor should one dress as if denying one's age, attempting to be seen as young. One should admit to the age difference, look grown up and mature and dress the part.

In the balancing act between accepting of their age, yet not dressing older than necessary, my informants singled out various markers of age, ranging from girlish to granny-like. When comparing styles of dress, the Swedish concept of *tant* (little old lady) and *tantig* (frumpish) recurred as markers of ageing (Lövgren 2013). The women talked about wanting to avoid being seen as outdated and old-fashioned—even though you are old, you do not have to dress like a *tant*, they said. When going through their wardrobes, some took pride in describing their garments as the very opposite of drab and unfashionable by referring to this concept. Others anxiously asked me whether I found their style *tantig*. Hence Kerstin, 72, ventured that 'I imagine my style is not very *tantig*, frumpy, like several others'. [...] I don't

believe my clothes are frumpy, do you?' Sofia, 82, described how she asked her daughters for advice about clothes:

Sofia: When I ask my daughters for advice, they say it every time: 'Sure, you're an old lady, Mum, but you don't have to buy little old lady clothes.'

Q: And what would be little old lady clothes?

Sofia: Well, what are they? Well, I think there's a lot of knitted pullovers and cardigans, in dark, drab colours, often a bit of a bodge. They think I should wear happy colours.

She went to the wardrobe and pulled out a suit in brown, explaining how the jacket is too long and dark, and that even though it was good quality and fitted her well, she had not worn it much, thinking that it aged her. The age marker of the *tant* was a warning sign of social invisibility and irrelevance; what Sofia calls 'happy colours' can be a means to combat the impression of being too old.

The Swedish concept of *tant* has a corresponding dimension: the *kulturtant*, the cultured, museum-visiting, theatre-going woman, usually middle-aged or older. She is stereotypically represented in loose, flowing garments and bold bright colours, very much associated with the Swedish Gudrun Sjödén brand. The cliché of this culturally active woman has often been used in a derogatory way. Lately there has been a countermovement, and the concepts of *tant* and above all *kulturtant* have been reclaimed, the latter as an affirmative categorization rather than a reducing and limiting epithet. Still, the figure of the older woman, redolent of the abusive invective of the climacteric witch, or the description of her hair as 'menopausal red', represents a figure of warning. She is taboo. Too colourful and visible, she takes up too much public space, demanding to be seen and taken into account, making herself conspicuous by her appearance. Colour and its differing cultural meanings are yet again relevant: here it is the colour red that is in question, symbolizing the woman who tries too hard to conceal and combat her age, and thus making her a target of ridicule. The fact that the older women's choice of clothing is so open to criticism—whether rendering them visible or invisible—points to a gender system in which women are subordinated, and where older women are subject to both sexism and ageism.

Hanne, 63, described her feeling that style of dress and age should be consistent: 'There are certain garments that I would think, sure that's nice, if I were seventeen.' The interviews showed that it was also important not to look older than necessary. Making an aesthetic effort and taking care in choosing outfits was proof that they were alive. Or as Alice, 94, put it, 'Dress is more important when you are old than when you are young. Because you don't have to make yourself older than you are.' Against that was the fact that some informants felt uncertain about what to wear at their age. They felt they had little to find in high-street

shops, for those styles were designed for young bodies, without the elasticated waists and general comfort they wanted. How to look grown up and mature without looking old was a dilemma for several of my informants.

### **Concluding remarks: doing age**

This essay considers a style categorization that my informants themselves used: the emic notion of 'fun'. 'Fun' should here be viewed in the light of different negotiations of age. When describing their style and changes of style as they grew older, the women did not describe totally new and different style preferences. Instead they spoke of gradual transitions and adaptations to their physical changes and differing needs depending on how they spent their retirement. They spoke of keeping and using garments for years, sometimes even decades—something that testifies to style not being too closely linked to a specific age. The same is also indicated by the fact that some of them wore hand-me-downs from their daughters. This was not thought age inappropriate. Indeed, several said that compared to their mothers, they had more freedom to dress in any style they chose.

Garments do gender and age, but the rules and norms of appropriateness are rarely spelled out. The informants conveyed a tacit understanding and often an acceptance of these implied norms of age appropriateness and the identity claims open to older women. For them, the norm is to put an effort into one's style and appearance, yet not to respond to social ostracism by dressing in a neutral manner since neutral colours enforce invisibility. Bright, happy colours, on the other hand, risk leaving them open to criticism for seeking visibility. Failure is often how one realizes the boundaries. The warning figure of the stereotypical little old lady, dressed not to be noticed, has been discussed. Another epithet that identifies age norms is 'girlish', a phrase that the women used to describe a failure to dress according to one's age. Older women run the risk of condemnation if they dress too young, as 'mutton dressed as lamb', caught in public in the act of refusing to acknowledge or adapt to chronology (Fairhurst 1998; Twigg 2013). To dress as a mature grown-up, who accepts their age, and yet to convey an interest in fashion and aesthetics, is a difficult balancing act. Fun, happy, colourful garments, small details that make the wearer feel confident at having invested in their looks, are a viable strategy in communicating the desired mix of maturity and vivacity, in claiming attention without violating any norms by demanding to be seen as a sexual being. By referring to 'fun', my informants felt allowed to communicate an interest in dress, to enjoy and take pleasure in aesthetics and fashion—within limits. They could resist incipient frumpiness and invisibility by dressing differently to the mainstream stereotype, yet not subversively in a subcultural style. Fun could allow them to combine the mature with the playful—play as in

leisure, ease, and comfort. When the women described their style of dress, it was with restraint and distance. This can be interpreted as somewhat self-deprecating, but also as a desire to fit in rather than to stick out.

Fun can be interpreted as a negotiable style categorization for older women; an age-appropriate way of displaying their ongoing work with their clothing and bodies, enjoying the aesthetic dimensions of presenting themselves, while neither denying age nor masking it. The women used fun as a strategic resource in a cautious claim for visibility and uniqueness in a culture that renders ageing women invisible.

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## CHAPTER 12

### EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF GROWING OLD IN RURAL PLACES: PROBLEMATIZING THE USE OF DIFFERENT METHODOLOGIES

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The aim of this essay is to elaborate on how to capture different aspects of the emotional layers of growing old in rural places using different kinds of methods. It problematizes the use of different methods used to capture and reveal aspects of rurality by discussing the use of a quantitative survey, in-depth interviews, and a photovoice project. The studies have been conducted in Sweden and Canada.

An ageing population is framed as a problem in many countries worldwide. An example from the European region is that every seventh person is older than 65, and the proportion is constantly increasing (WHO 2008). For Sweden, the corresponding figure is that over 18 per cent of the population are over 65 (Lennartson & Heimerdson 2012), although 24 per cent are older than 65 in rural areas compared with 15 per cent in cities (Statistics Sweden 2012). In Canada, 90 per cent of the land mass is rural and 20 per cent of the population is rural (CIHI 2006). The rural population is an ageing population, and rural communities are becoming feminized as most of the seniors living in rural areas will be women; in Canada by 2021 one in four seniors will live in rural settings (Health Canada 2002). Growing old in rural places is something that affects a significant proportion of the population in many countries today, and we need further research in order to understand how rurality, ageing, and gender are intertwined. A comparison between larger and smaller municipalities in Sweden shows that social inequalities are lower in small municipalities while gender differences are larger (Melinder 2007); in other words, there are more traditional gender regimes in rural areas compared with more populated areas.

In some rural communities in Canada, seniors comprise up to 40 per cent of the population (Statistics Canada 2001), as the large baby boom cohort retires to smaller communities or chooses to age in place. Older women are one of the fastest growing categories of the female population (Ministry of Industry 2006) and many of them live in rural areas. Yet, little is known about the health needs and resources of seniors in rural areas or of how gender and rural context impact seniors' health (Leipert et al. 2012b). Many challenges are faced by friends, family, and caregivers in rural settings as they attempt to provide care when health



resources are not available or are insufficient (Forbes & Hawranik 2012; Keating & Eales 2012), as is often the case in small isolated settings (CIHI 2006). Living in rural settings can be an especially emotionally laden experience for women as they play key roles as service providers, caregivers, and residents, often ageing alone and with chronic health conditions, in underserved rural communities. It has been claimed that there is an 'irrevocable link among economic restructuring, local service capacity, and ageing as the most important policy issue' regarding health in resource-dependent (mining, farming, and forestry) hinterland communities in Canada (Skinner et al., 477). Thus the study of ageing, emotion, and rurality is timely, and requires serious investigation if the health of rural seniors is to be effectively supported.

We would argue that growing old in rural places is something different than growing old in built-up areas. Rural municipalities face particular challenges when it comes to providing welfare, partly due to a smaller tax base and partly due to the larger distances to be covered, which substantially increase the costs for maintaining a care system throughout a given district (Söderberg 2005). Our starting point here is the major changes to the structure and organization of eldercare that has been taken place in the past decade in Sweden and Canada.

In Sweden and Canada, the increasing older population is often framed as a challenge for the whole country, but especially so for rural areas. Government policies have focused on the 'burden' that an increased proportion of older people in the population will place on the health services and economies of local municipalities. At the same time, the overall notion is that rural areas are a 'burden' for the rest of the country, and in this way growing old in rural places puts the individual in a fragile position as a 'double burden'. Growing old in rural areas might therefore be a highly emotional experience that can affect the physical, mental, social health, and coping abilities of rural seniors.

The concept of 'emotion' involves a multifaceted process and there is no consensual definition of the phenomenon. While some theorists use it as a synonym for subjective feelings, others argue that there are more components inherent in the concept—appraisal, for example, or bodily symptoms, action tendencies, and facial and vocal expressions (Scherer 2005). Emotions are processes involved in social interaction and are thus not only a private concern, but are also properties of a dyad, a group, or a collective; in other words, emotions have to be taken into consideration in the work for social change as they regulate social interaction (Kappas 2013). In this essay, we follow Debora Thien (2012) in her notion that focusing on emotions 'bring a new and meaningful way to generate detailed considerations of rurality and gender' (423). Focusing on emotions can

give insight to rural experiences and the socio-spatial, socio-political context, and can illuminate the interplay of gender and rurality (Thien 2012). There are various definitions of emotion, and together they reveal human complexity and help us to reflect and affect our understanding of the context. We have elected to use a broad definition of emotion in accordance with Scherer (2005), seeing it as a process in both an individual and the social sphere (Kappas 2013). However, the main focus here will be on the subjective feeling component in emotion, with quantitative and narrative research in Sweden and photovoice research in Canada discussed for their utility in addressing emotions and ageing for rural seniors. The starting point is eldercare in rural settings in Canada and Sweden, drawing on three different studies of health, living conditions, and gender, and discussing the three different methods used—surveys, qualitative interviews, and photovoice—in relation to emotions and rurality, but also the different methodologies in relation to one another.

### **Eldercare in rural places**

The traditional Swedish welfare system has moved from a discourse of planned economy towards a more market-oriented ideology, a shift that is perceived as a solution to the demands of higher productivity and efficiency (Serbant 2000). In some municipalities, municipal institutions have been outsourced to private contractors or employee cooperatives in order to increase competition and improve quality and efficiency while reducing costs, while the municipalities retain full responsibility for ensuring good elder care (Henriksen & Rosenqvist 2003). Since the Swedish municipalities have far-reaching autonomy, there is also a considerable geographical variation in public care for the elderly (Trydegård & Thorslund 2001). In Sweden, the county councils are responsible for organizing and financing health-care services, including hospitals, eldercare, and primary health care. Municipalities are responsible for social welfare services, including the care of the elderly. When it comes to Swedish eldercare, the government is the source of the moral regulations that apply in the shape of the Social Services Act (SoL) (2001, 453); it is then up to local politicians and civil servants in each municipality to put these rules into action, and their practical interpretation can differ between municipalities. Therefore, central guidelines are reworked into local practice. Each municipality has developed rules for case-processing, and in this way value judgements are generated (Hasenfeld 2010), while executive managers in the municipalities' social welfare systems have to translate political goals and strategies into practical care for the elderly in their communities (Henriksen & Rosenqvist 2003).

## Survey

There is a feminization of ageing in rural communities in high-income countries such as Sweden and Canada (CIHI 2006, Keating 2008), while older women in general are among the poorest in society (Gunnarsson 2000) and suffer more from health problems compared to men (Lennartsson & Heimerson 2013). However, there is a lack of comprehensive epidemiological and quantitative studies focusing on older people and emotions in rural areas, particularly from a gender perspective.

In Sweden, women and men living in rural areas have lower life expectancy rates and higher mortality due to injuries and ischemic heart disease (Melinder 2007). A comparison between mental health and different kinds of municipality groups show some contradictory results; men are more suicidal in smaller municipalities and women less suicidal compared with larger municipalities, while mental well-being is more positive for both men and women in smaller municipalities compared to larger (Melinder 2007). Studies on depression, on the other hand, show that older women are more depressed compared to men, but the author concludes that there is a lack of studies of geographical and cross-cultural variations (Djernes 2006).

Most epidemiological studies of health among the elderly focus on those younger than 85 years, but there are some exceptions, among them the National Survey on Living Conditions (ULF) conducted by Sweden Statistics every eight years (Sweden Statistics 2006). Questionnaire studies that are repeated in the same age groups at different times make it possible to analyse trends in the population. The last report from the ULF study shows that in general, even if mental health problems have become a major health burden in Sweden, the increase is mainly due to an increase in mental problems in younger age groups. Reported emotions such as worry, anxiety, and recurrent tiredness are even lower in the older age groups in 2003 than they were in 1980 (Sweden Statistics 2006), even after controlling for gender, class, family structure, and region. One problem with the reporting of health in that report is that health differences between men and women not are analysed, and also that health and living conditions in rural areas have not been in focus. However, unpublished data from the survey show that both men and women aged 65 or more report more general ill-health in rural areas (50 per cent of men and 60 per cent of women) compared to the cities (35 per cent and 46 per cent), indicating that where one lives also is interesting to analyse further in relation to health among elderly. About twice as many women as men in rural areas report feelings of loneliness and forlornness (12 and 5 per cent

respectively), and it is thus important to study this further from a gender perspective, particularly as feelings of loneliness are strongly related to depression in rural areas (Burholt & Scharf 2013).

Quantitative studies have been criticized by feminist researchers as being male-centered, positivistic, and patriarchal and for using a male norm not valid for women, but Miner-Rubino et al. (2007) argue that it is possible to use surveys also to achieve feminist goals, to increase knowledge about women's and other marginalized groups' lived experiences, and to be a tool in discussions with politicians and policymakers when arguing for social change. They claim that this is possible, because feminist researchers can pose questions that are a vehicle for showing the importance of gendered living conditions related to sexism, harassment, violence, poverty, and so on, and also that feminist researchers can interpret results from surveys based on knowledge of the gender order, and thus provide a basis for social change towards a more gender-equal society.

An advantage of a statistical analysis based on a random sample is that it is possible to generalize the results to a larger population than the actual sample, and to take characteristics such as socioeconomic differences and other social variables into account in the same analysis. It is also possible to make gender differences in health and gendered living conditions visible for politicians and policymakers, and show diagrams and figures in a simplified and comprehensive way. These are important advantages for small rural communities that are often overlooked by politicians and policymakers.

Quite apart from the methodological difficulties related to the question of the studies' response rates, validity, and reliability, quantitative studies are unable to capture conditions and circumstances that are more inductive than deductive. The method is limited to predetermined hypotheses and may lead researchers to overlook important emotions and other outcomes, as well as relations to other phenomena. There are also difficulties with capturing the complexity of society and emotional nuances. Used alone, the quantitative method does not include the informants in policy change and has thus less focus on empowerment than participatory qualitative research methods.

### **Qualitative informant interviews**

Conducting interviews as a way of collecting empirical material is one of the main methods in qualitative research. Many scholars have stressed the importance of talking to people as being central to social science, since it is a good way of using the power of language to illuminate meaning (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995; Legard et al. 2006). The methodology used in the study discussed here rests on the

interpretative tradition of policy ethnography (Rhodes 2013), focusing on the complexity of human sense-making, the emotions connected to growing old in rural places, and everyday policy-making.<sup>47</sup> The complexities of human sense-making are admitted in the acknowledgement of the conflicting interpretations among stakeholders. The method also recognizes the need to be sensitive to the rich, in-depth, and idiographic meanings that the participants assign to them. The qualitative informant interview works well in terms of stimulating people's thinking patterns and narratives. The intent was to increase the understanding of the emotional aspects of rurality and growing old. In total, 27 qualitative informant interviews in three rural Swedish municipalities were conducted. The interviews were conducted with politicians, officials such as managers and needs assessors, and representatives of elderly organizations at the municipal level. The interviews with officials and politicians are to be regarded as elite interviews, as the informants hold formal positions with the expectation that they will have good information and an overview of the eldercare in the municipality.

The chosen interview method resulted in deep, nuanced, rich narratives where the informants were given the opportunity to tell their stories in their own words, stressing the things that were important to them. These are event- and experience-based narratives, created to communicate and justify their actions, in some cases as public officials. Rather than being representations of 'reality', I regard the narratives as created for an audience (Mattingly 1998) to give meaning to actions. The narratives reveal a wide range of emotions, from fear and loneliness to joy and pride. The method reveals the fear of growing old, losing control, or finding oneself alone, as well as anxiety. As an example of loneliness and anxiety is the narrative from an older female:

The nights, the nights are so long and lonely. A friend called me crying and told me that she had called the home care during the night and she [the home carer] said: We will come to you...in the morning, because you see during the nights we are asleep (Older woman).

But there were also feelings of joy connected to self-determination and pride in working with the elderly (Nyhlén & Giritli Nygren 2013; Giritli Nygren et al. 2014). The needs assessors often talk about feelings of insufficiency, but also pride:

What is important is that I as a needs assessor speak on behalf of the individual. I don't speak on behalf of the municipality or the relatives, I don't speak on the behalf of the county council, I only speak on the behalf of the elderly, I always put my

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<sup>47</sup> The study in question comes under the project 'Tryggt boende för äldre i glesbygd: Boendeformer, genus och hälsa i regional politik och praktik' [Safe living for elderly in rural areas: Housing health and gender in policy and practice].

focus on the individual and his or her needs. I respect the individual and I look them in the eyes... that is my role (Needs assessor).

The method worked nicely as a way of capturing overt emotions that the informants in some ways were aware of and comfortable to talk about. Two overarching themes appeared in the interviews: fear and safety in rural areas, and the desire as an elderly person to be able to decide for oneself. Safety is talked about as one of the advantages of rural areas and a way of promoting the rural areas.

The concept of safety has been given something of a market value...if you feel unsecure... if you feel unsafe you are even willing to pay a price in order to feel safe again...and then I'm not only talking about money, but even a kind of social price... you have the everyday support of your fellow human beings. (Politician)

At the same time there is a fragility about life in the rural areas that creates issues of insecurity when the areas are sparsely populated and the distances are large.

and then you have these so-called safety alarms, but if there is a power cut or if your phone dies then the alarm won't work, so where's the safety in that? (Older woman)

In this way, the method reveals information based on the informants' own perspectives instead of focusing on categories and dimensions determined by the researchers. The method allowed the interviewer to follow the informants' narratives and to clarify things by asking follow-up questions. The ambition is therefore not to gain repeatability or generalizations in a positivistic sense; the value of the results is rather judged in terms of the extent to which it allows others to understand the phenomenon (Schram & Caterino 2006). However, the method lacks the opportunity to make more general statements or generalizable assumptions about a larger population than the actual sample, especially about the interplay of emotions and the experience of growing old in rural areas. This may prove to be important, since the experience of growing old in rural places may well turn out to be a highly emotional experience, but it is not possible to answer questions about how common these feelings are using a qualitative narrative method.

## **Photovoice**

Photovoice is an innovative, participatory, qualitative research method that was originally designed for research with women in rural China (Wang et al. 1996). It provides study participants with the opportunity to take photographs and record in logbooks to reveal information relevant to themselves, their communities, and the study's purpose. Photovoice photographs can facilitate discussion, visually document situations that are otherwise difficult to describe (such as rural isolation), and promote empathy and understanding ('A picture is worth a thousand words') that foster social change (Leipert 2013; Leipert et al. 2011; Wang

& Burris 1997). As a result, emotional and contextual understanding by both participants and researchers, as well as by those using the research, such as policymakers and practitioners, can be fostered using this research method.

Because of its philosophical roots in feminist inquiry, Freire's critical consciousness work, and participatory action (Wang & Burris 1997), photovoice effectively facilitates an understanding of gendered experiences and perceptions of context, such as those related to rural life, from participants' perspectives. Spatial, social, and political contexts are revealed in photos that include various individuals, their locations, and their interactions with others as well as the rural space. For example, photovoice research has explored the significance of curling for rural women in Canada (Leipert et al. 2011), a topic about which little is known and involving a leisure activity—curling—that is key to the emotional, social, and physical health and quality of life in small-town Canada (Morrow & Wamsley 2013).

In addition, photovoice can help to reveal assumptions, beliefs, and values that can advance an understanding of needs, resources, and change. In a study about health promotion and rural older women (Leipert 2013), photos by the study participants, all older rural women, revealed important information about not only health needs and issues in a rural setting, but also about resilience and hardiness in coping with these needs. The women were prompted by these photos to cry, laugh, sigh, and express other feelings as they explained the photos' significance. These emotions enhanced an understanding of the meaning and importance of the various people (family, friends, care providers), buildings and institutions (churches, long-term care facilities), personal and public settings (homes, gardens), and other elements in their lives as ageing women in rural contexts.

Evidently, the taking and discussing of photos presents information that supplements the narrative and statistical data, and also reveals new information that cannot easily or accurately be retrieved or represented by these other methods. In addition, the presence and depth of emotional understanding can be charted more clearly with photovoice research, as noted by informants' responses to photos, whether eye contact, nods, facial expressions, or other non-verbal emotional indicators. These emotional indicators may both confirm or deny verbal and photographic evidence, thereby enhancing the soundness of understanding and capturing the diversity of various rural experiences and interpretations. As a result, photovoice research can help describe the rich and diverse nature of ageing in rural environments, and the emotions involved in living and ageing there.

In addition, by discussing participants' photos in a group setting, photovoice enhances the rural participants' understanding of this type of research. This can

help with changes to local policy and practice, as local people initiate and sustain resources in their communities. For example, photos can draw attention to problematic ageing situations—infrastructure problems such as broken pavements and the absence of ramps, for example—and prompt accurate, context-based action to address them. The logbooks, meanwhile, facilitate inclusivity and confidentiality for rural participants who wish to provide private information rather than verbal expressions in rural group situations where everyone is acquainted. In conclusion, photovoice can provide an opportunity for therapeutic interaction as participants share photos, speak, and are heard—opportunities that are rare for rural women in general (Leipert et al. 2012a) and older women in particular. Emotionally, such experiences can be very empowering, not only for the research participants, but for the rural communities too.

### *Recommendations regarding photovoice*

In order to obtain accurate interpretations of emotional knowledge, or indeed any type of knowledge, using photovoice, it is important that each photo be discussed, rather than only one or two as is usual in a photovoice group situation. This may require longer or more group sessions and/or individual interviews with each participant to allow time for a discussion of all photos. In addition, participants' titling of each photo can enhance accuracy and clarity by designating meaning. As literacy rates can be lower among older rural residents compared to their urban counterparts (CIHI 2006), repeated, in-depth explanations of the content and process of recording logbooks or using a camera use may be required. The usual ethical requirement that study participants must obtain the signatures of those whose photos they take may pose particular issues for older participants, as they may feel uncomfortable explaining the study to others and asking for their signatures; however, the importance of capturing rural social involvement in the photos cannot be overestimated, as it is often social support (in other words, people) that is key to emotional health and ageing in rural settings, and thus the inclusion of people in the photos must be encouraged. It is also important to provide sufficient time and care during group and individual interviews for emotions about the photos to be expressed and explored, so that this rich source of information, virtually unique to the photovoice experience, can be sufficiently appreciated and captured. Indeed, emotional responses are as important as behavioural responses in determining what is needed, why, when, where, and how, and whether resources that are or could be put in place will be accepted, available, and used—important information for practitioners and policymakers in rural settings (Kulig & Williams 2012; Leipert et al. 2012a; Thien 2012).

Morse (2012) has stated that the qualitative researcher provides 'a different kind of evidence—one that illustrates ... and emotionally arouses and provides instant



comprehension ... a common-sense type of information that removes the necessity for extensive and costly data collection' often required by quantitative research (68). In addition, she claims that the emotional and comprehensible nature of qualitative research helps to humanize health care, thereby providing 'a moral dimension, sensitizing us to significant issues', and helps us to 'advocate for the vulnerable, communicating their concerns', 'critique health science', 'identify and document ... actions of care', and provide 'a moral commentary on removing inhumane practices and creating humanizing change' (68). Photovoice, with its combined use of photos, interviews, and recorded perspectives provided by the participants themselves, has all these requisites, and, moreover, in ways that are quite different from quantitative methods. As such, photovoice commands both a unique and a supplemental position in other research, such as in quantitative approaches—positions that can significantly advance understanding, practices, and policies regarding such things as ageing and emotions in rural contexts.

### ***Conclusions***

This essay has shown that different methodologies can capture different aspects of the potentially highly emotional experience of growing old in rural areas. The emotional experience of being a double 'burden'—not only growing old, but also living in a rural area—needs to be elaborated in different ways using different methodologies.

As knowledge about emotions among the rural elderly from a gender perspective is scarce, there could be advantages to using a mixed method approach when remedying this. It is possible to use quantitative and qualitative methods in parallel, posing different questions to get a fuller understanding of the phenomenon, but also focusing on a broad research question that encourages answers that use different methods and epistemological perspectives (Stewart & Cole 2007).

This chapter shows that all the different methods have their advantages and drawbacks when exploring emotions and ageing in rural settings. The quantitative method can generate important knowledge at the population level about the association between emotions and rurality, and at the same time takes several other factors into account in its statistical analyses. The quantitative method makes it possible to analyse the relation between factors such as gender and rurality, which indicates that living places and spaces do matter for the reporting of health. We would argue there is a need for further analyses, focusing on gender, health, and location. In this way, the quantitative method may be used to increase knowledge about women's experiences and ultimately result in social change. However, being limited to the use of predetermined hypotheses may result in

overlooking important experiences and emotions. The point here is that quantitative methods may advantageously be used with qualitative methodologies such as interviews and photovoice in the exploration of emotions and their significance for health in rural settings.

In studying the emotions connected to growing old in rural places, the language used in the interviews proved to be a fruitful source of information. This research approach made it possible to capture the complexity and conflicting emotions. At the same time the interviews only captured emotions that the participants were aware of and in some sense comfortable to talk about, and a number of different emotions came into play. One advantage with the method is how the personal encounter between the interviewer and the informants sometimes revealed the emotional layers in the experience of both growing old and rurality. The method gave the opportunity to elaborate and discuss emotions and ambivalences, and provided the interviewer with the opportunity to ask follow-up questions and to discuss the narratives and the emotions revealed in them. The limitations of the method are the inability to make generalizable statements and the tendency only to reveal those emotions that the informants are aware of and choose to talk about. These disadvantages can be offset by using photovoice.

Photovoice has a unique ability to capture and reveal aspects of rurality and their implications for ageing and emotion in rural settings. Of the three methodologies discussed in this essay, photovoice is the only one to originate in studies with a specific focus on rurality. Photos taken by participants can be used to spark a discussion of the obvious, as well as more tangential and sometimes more sensitive information. The photographs can reveal emotional layers of rurality that the participants sometimes are not aware of or able to talk about, and in this way it is possible to gain knowledge about rurality that may be important to social change. However, in order to facilitate a clear and accurate understanding of the meanings intended in the photos, it is important that all the photos be discussed. This can be time-consuming, but equally can result in rich, nuanced understanding of the participants' emotions regarding health in rural settings.

Clearly, the use of multiple research methods deepens and extends understanding of ageing and emotions in rural contexts. In order to increase our knowledge of the interplay of emotions, rurality, and gender, we would stress the importance of using different kinds of methods.

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## **Concluding discussion**



## CHAPTER 13

### THE NORMALITY OF EMOTIONS?

A discussion on the normality of emotions among professors *Gabriele Griffin* (University of York), *Ann Cvetkovich* (University of Texas, Austin), *Patricia Clough* (CUNY Graduate Center, Queens College, US)

**Gabriele Griffin:** Well, I've got some questions that I would like to raise, but I'm hoping that this is going to be more of a conversation, because I'm sure for all of us, this has raised a lot of issues, and you in the workshop may well also have questions. I want to start by following up on the last panel ['Growing Old in Rural Places, Emotional Narratives'], and the question of emotions raised there. Because part of what I was thinking about was also a question that was raised from the floor: what does this do to the researcher and the question of closure when you encounter vulnerable subjects? Who are vulnerable because of structural issues, that you may well feel completely unable to deal with? And I would like to link that question to an earlier one: how can we deal with difference in an ethnical manner? Take it away girls!

**Patricia Clough:** Six years ago I went back into psychoanalysis—note the word, back into—so I had been in some kind of therapy all my life. I wanted to return to the place where I grew up in my psyche and actually.

I grew up in a place called Corona in New York, which is a very famous place. It has been written about because of black and white politics and it is now the place of 16 or 17 different ethnic groups of colour, speaking many different languages. At the same time that I went back into analysis I started to walk in Corona and continued for six years. During that time I did different kinds of things: I went to church groups and met kids, I talked to people, I brought students with me who were photographers. But I had no plan to do research and I especially did not want to produce ethnography about populations in Corona.

Then little by little a young woman joined me and she wanted to learn about video. So we were videoing and taking photographs, and we started interviewing people, and interviewing groups of young people, and it was great. We would walk together, she and I and then more people joined us so eventually there were about six of us, Chinese, Dominican, Columbian, Dominican, African American and Korean young adults. We would start to walk together and we started to develop a method. But I was thinking always, unlike in the therapeutic situation, we were walking *side by side*. I said that I wanted to do a book project about my life, so they were going to help me write about my life, of long ago, in that



community where they now live. And little by little we thought, why just my life? Why not *our lives*? It was like an interacting autobiography, but I didn't want to write. So we decided to put in a proposal to a remix festival where you remix sounds or images.

Well, we got accepted and I remember getting together in the room saying: well, can anybody do anything? We had someone who could sing, quite fantastically it turned out, and someone who wanted to try dancing, and we had some video and we had these photographs from our walks, so we put together a piece called *Ecstatic Corona*. To make a short story out of your question about vulnerable subjects, because they all were, I think we did produce a piece that was just phenomenal. I mean, I don't know how we did it—but we did and it is about vulnerability for sure but really just about our amazing relationship to each other!

A year after that first performance there was another call from the remix festival, and we all said, do we want to do it again? So we put in a proposal. And in about a month we put the second piece together—and something happened to all of us. I mean, we *really* were in ecstasy. That second piece was much more about all of us moving back even more from it being about my life. So one of my answers to your question regarding vulnerable subjects is: to move with them as if they will be with you for the rest of your life.

I do performance pieces of my own, and they do the music and images for it, so we are in some kind of a thing that we can't separate, and I know that's not possible for every project, but I like the idea of never ending the relationship with them. I was thinking this morning about the feeling of poverty that all of us in the group share. I grew up in that poor neighbourhood with a sense of emotional poverty. They knew my history, so little by little, while walking *Corona*, they started sharing their own stories. It was really amazing to me.

They did not know each other; they only knew me, so slowly they had to build their relationships with each other as well. I would be there, but not there. I heard lately that they go out sometimes by themselves, which I like. So what I am trying to say here is to make a point about the non-endingness of the relationships we might make in what we think of as research. I don't always think of the word ethical, but I feel the project is so collaborative that our lives don't separate so easily from each other anymore. That's how I feel about it; it's kind of ethics about it in that way.

**Ann Cvetkovich:** Because I want to respond to what Patricia has just said, I am going to say something completely different than I had planned, which is what I love about the live encounter! I recently wrote an article – for the collection *Oral History in the Visual Arts* – called 'The craft of conversation: oral history, and

lesbian feminist art practice,'<sup>48</sup> which is about interviews with Allyson Mitchell and Sheila Pepe, the artists who were featured in my book *Depression: A Public Feeling*.<sup>49</sup> When I interviewed them for the project, I didn't record the conversations, I just took notes on my computer while we talked, which seemed counter to the usual protocols for oral history research.

I've always struggled with how to use interview transcripts because there can be so much material and it can be so rich. When I start to break down the transcript into segments in order to analyse it, I feel like I'm doing violence to the liveness of the encounter. Performance studies have helped me think about the interview as a conversation. And it's very much like the 'walking beside role' that you were talking about, Patricia. I've come to consider conversation to be a research practice, including the conversations we have been having here at the workshop.

In order to write about my conversations with my artist friends, I used a method borrowed from a wonderful anthology called *Bodies of Evidence* about interview methods in LGBTQ studies – where oral history has been a central research practice).<sup>50</sup> Each contributor started with a segment from an interview they had done and they wrote about the surrounding contexts that are not present in the transcript, including what they were thinking during the interview process. This method acknowledges the complexity of the interview, and by extension the conversation, as a social relation that produces knowledge. For my written essay, rather than trying to capture the full force of the conversation that informed it, I focused on keywords and phrases that evoked my sense of the affective dynamic of the conversation: in Allyson's case it was the 'whirlpool' of the 'craft closet,' and in Sheila's case it was the 'magic of installation.' Although those phrases might have popped out in reading the transcript, I chose them based on my affective memory of the energy of the conversation and the collective thinking it produced.

Gabriele's question brings up for me the way that the normalization of affect can be thought about through queer theory. I've also been thinking here about normalization in terms of cultural assimilation. Feminism has helped show how being 'a good girl' is part of the normalization process for women, especially, those like me, who are white, raised middle class, and/or from Anglo-European nations (such as Canada, where I am from). Gender is part of neo-liberalism because all the ways in which one is taught to be a good girl are very convenient for establishing the norms that will make capitalism run better. These are processes of racialization

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<sup>48</sup> Cvetkovich, A. (2013). 'The craft of conversation: oral history, and lesbian feminist art practice,' *Oral History in the Visual Arts*. Eds. M. Partington and L. Sandino. London: Bloomsbury.

<sup>49</sup> Cvetkovich, A. (2012). *Depression: A Public Feeling*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

<sup>50</sup> Boyd, N.A. and H.N.R. Ramirez, eds. (2012). *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

as well, which is why decolonizing our autobiographies is central to the project of exploring 'Normalization and the Neo-liberal Welfare State.'

**Patricia Clough:** Yes, I do agree.

**Ann Cvetkovich:** At lunch, I was also talking to Annelie Bränström Öhman about class because I'm really interested in the modes of assimilation around class (and also race) that might be specific to Sweden and that are connected to gendered forms of normalization. I've been inspired by José Esteban Muñoz's work on ethnicity as an affect or feeling rather than an identity. Borrowing from queer notions of non-normative affect, he talks about ethnicity as something that manifests as "a certain ethics of the self that is utilized and deployed by people of color and other minoritarian subjects who don't feel quite right within the protocols of normative affect and comportment".<sup>51</sup>

How do we acknowledge and work from that sense of *not feeling quite right*, in which affect is a sign of both assimilation or normalization and something that escapes it? Such an approach is necessary for alternatives to the neoliberal management of identity and difference that go beyond the embrace of multicultural diversity. We don't quite know what that feels like in both ordinary encounters and collective ones. As it happens, I'm also trying to work this out in a writing project that resembles Patricia's *Ecstatic Corona* in its auto ethnographic exploration of locations and its use of experimental forms of writing.

**Patricia Clough:** I wanted say one thing quickly about emotions in this group, should I wait and you ask another question or —?

**Gabriele Griffin:** No, go ahead.

**Patricia Clough:** I'm not sure about your setting, but in New York City some groups are constantly policed, stopped and searched, so their top emotions are rage, and 'I'd like to fucking kill you'. So performance can be just great for illustrating these experiences, because the performance comes from that. We write together and there are a lot of the emotions like anger that get expressed in the performance before we can get to the sadness underneath — but we do get there and that process is really great. In the second performance we had only very few expressions of anger and more about loneliness, sadness and despair—darker

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<sup>51</sup> Muñoz, J. E. (2000). 'Feeling brown: ethnicity and affect in Ricardo Bracho's *The sweetest hangover and other STDs*,' *Theatre Journal* 52.1: 67-79.

feelings. The main character became a girl, named Mercy, who was institutionalized—and we were talking to her throughout the piece as she goes mad. It was really a beautiful piece.

I am also a psychotherapist and I wonder if we can move that rage around in communities; it would be so great. For me, in the second performance to see us go from rage to sort of identifying with this girl Mercy as emotions soften. I still can cry just thinking about it and I am trying to say this happens during the performance. It has its own efficacy. It's not just that you prepare for it, then you have it, and after it you are like another person. We like doing them because things happen, the movement of emotion through performance, and we are talking music and dance and words—

**Gabriele Griffin:** Can I ask something there, because, in a sense, performance in a way always strikes me as extraordinary and maybe that's quite wrong. What I am thinking about in relation to this question of normalization is how that relates to another word that has come up a lot here at the workshop in the last couple of days. And this is the *everyday*: everyday racism, everyday this, and every day that... So how do you see the relation between everyday racism and normalization? And not just racism. You can take any of the other everydaynesses that we condense in research events, in an interesting but also quite problematic way sometimes. How do you think about that relation?

**Ann Cvetkovich.** I don't associate performance with the extraordinary because I'm so interested in its ordinary dimensions. My early work on sensationalism in *Mixed Feelings* explored genres such as melodrama, sentimentality, and the gothic that still pervade contemporary culture, including documentary forms that often disavow the sensational. Sensationalism happens when an inchoate set of things assemble around something that we could name as an event.<sup>52</sup> How is it that ordinary affects converge to produce something sensational, including events? And what happens if we try to unpack the event as something that is ordinary? I'm not against using the categories of the sensational or the extraordinary, but I always want to think about them in relation to the ordinary. I'm interested in unpacking autobiography or unpacking place in order to notice the ordinariness of processes of assimilation or normalization that produce conventional forms of behaviour or performance. How do we develop the tools to observe this process at work? Psychoanalysis is one way of doing this, but there are other forms of politicized analysis that ask 'What was that event that seemed like it was nothing?'

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<sup>52</sup> See Katie Stewart and Lauren Berlant on the event: Stewart, K. (2007). *Ordinary Affects*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press and Berlant, L. (2010). *Cruel Optimism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

You can get melodramatic about it – trying to see where damage occurred – but you also end up noticing that damage is happening all the time.

**Patricia Clough:** Trauma.

**Ann Cvetkovich:** –but it doesn't have to take the form of trauma –

**Patricia Clough:** Yes, right –

**Ann Cvetkovich:** –it's also what we call the ordinary or everyday. For example, I try to teach the concept of gender identity in my classes by asking my students to notice when it was that they were told that this is what it means to be a girl -- or a boy. Can they learn to notice the process of normalization at work in their own early histories? And can they imagine alternatives? I think that is some of the work those of you studying children's books are doing as well. We want to ask what it would look like to raise queer children – that is, to embrace diversity, difference, the non-normal, the queer in all of its complexity – and its ordinariness. That's an interesting project – the actual practice of raising queer children.<sup>53</sup>

**Patricia Clough:** Like Eve Sedgwick suggested?

**Ann Cvetkovich:** Yes, yes.

**Patricia Clough:** I would like to do some politics on your question, and so I was thinking about the granular, or as you remembered kindly about what I was saying, what did you call it –?

**Gabriele Griffin:** Rescaling.

**Patricia Clough.** The rescaling—thank you—the rescaling of the focus of governance, the creation of precociousness, how some of the things we want to bring up here already *have* been brought up by governance in relationship with capital. And they are all interested in the event as well. So how do you work doing some things that seem to you to be extraordinary, that have become ordinary but not in the nice sense you Ann were saying, but in the sense that we have become already 'captured', or 'simulated' as you were saying. So the young adults I am with can say 'I'm Chinese', or 'I'm queer', or 'I'm Columbian'. It's an identity politics that they know all about. And they know what I think about that. We talk

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<sup>53</sup> Sedgwick, E.K. (1991). 'How to bring your kids up gay.' *Social Text* 29: 18-27.

about stuff that they know and I know so there is no presumption that they don't know what academics know. It's very interesting to hear them know about things that social scientists don't know that they know. Am I making sense? So I'm not sure what is ordinary any more, and what's event, and what' simulation and who has or doesn't have access to any of it? Anyway, I think it's a great question you've raised, Gabriele.

**Gabriele Griffin:** Do other people in the room have queries about this, about the everyday, and normalization, and their interrelation?

**Patricia Clough:** And then maybe we should ask if for some people there really is a meaningful every day.

**Gabriele Griffin:** Or maybe there is a different meaningful everyday?

**Patricia Clough:** —They may rather live the population description of them, they become these populations.

**Gabriele Griffin:** But do they? Think about the guy who talked about potatoes<sup>54</sup>.

**Patricia Clough:** Well, but every time they are stopped and frisked they know that they are some population. And that's part of their everyday in a way.

**Gabriele Griffin:** Yes—

**Patricia Clough:** —I don't know what I am trying to say so—

**Gabriele Griffin:** What do people think?

**Ulrika Schmauch**<sup>55</sup>: I'm not sure.

**Gabriele Griffin:** I'll tell you why I asked the question. I was struck by the relation between everydayness and invisibility that was being articulated in different ways,

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<sup>54</sup> The workshop had a session focusing on "Growing old in rural places –emotional narratives" with Beverly Liepert, Sara Nyhlén and Katja Gillander Gådin where Sara described a situation when an old man was talking about his fantasies of being able to chose the amount of potatoes he would like to eat instead of receiving food packages where the amount of food is already decided by the company delivering the packages.

<sup>55</sup> Ulrika Schmauch, Umeå University, Sweden

in different papers, during this workshop. For example, things in the workplace, emotional experiences, and so on—that is everyday, but in a sense hidden. There is almost like a parallel discourse that goes on about normalization, so from my point of view it doesn't quite capture what this other thing is, that nonetheless, however, I think we are after.

**Patricia Clough:** Invisible.

**Gabriele Griffin:** That invisible everyday thing which is exactly your granular, but—

**Bob Pease**<sup>56</sup>: It seems to me that some of the things that are everyday invisible are invisible to some of us, but they are very, very visible and clear to others.

**Patricia Clough:** That's what I was trying to say, thank you. [Laughter]

**Bob Pease:** I think that everyday sexism is invisible, on the whole, to men when men engage in sexist practices that are normalized. But my sense is that women pick this everyday sexism up all the time. Women have a sensibility to that everyday sexism, in ways that men don't. And even when we talk about the invisibility of privilege or the invisibility of whiteness, if you don't have privilege it is not invisible. When you don't have privilege, you have to negotiate your life around it. You deal with it all the time. So I think it's interesting, this question of invisibility.

**Patricia Clough:** Definitely. But what I was trying to say is that stop and frisk is not invisible to these kids. But as you go back into the community, and if you've never been stopped and frisked, and I have not been, that's like finding something that was invisible to you, but it's not to them. This is such an old anthropological question: how to be with people who to some extent don't share some experiences that really mark them. Some we do anyway, and so what's the finding? And how do you do the ethics of walking beside, instead of looking at? How do you uncover something that you know as a social scientist, and now you have found it in the real—?

**Bob Pease:** But I wonder about this issue of 'walking beside'. Because if you are embedded in unequal structural relations how can you walk beside those with less power equally? Can you really walk beside?

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<sup>56</sup> Bob Pease, Deakin University, Australia

**Patricia Clough:** Physically—

**Bob Pease:** Is ‘walking beside’ a way of avoiding the discomfort of our position of privilege and power? Are we wanting to form some kind of connection or relations of solidarity with those who are marginal? The idea of walking beside presumes some sort of equality in structural relation that just isn’t there. I wonder whether walking beside captures the relations of solidarity we are aiming to achieve?

**Patricia Clough:** Well, I think it captures it exactly; I mean, we certainly were opening up psychically to each other, so there were things that we all have experienced in childhood, me included. That was one of the basis of our connections: that we knew there were certain things we all had experienced. But walking beside also did suggest we couldn’t just be face to face, that there were these differences that were just going to live on as differences; they weren’t going to be renegotiated; I wasn’t going to become one of them, or them me.

**Gabriele Griffin:** I think that’s very interesting, a metaphor in a way: the things we cannot face. I was struck in the photovoice discussion when you were asking about the method, about the way in which the optic can become the thing you concentrate on, to discuss the thing you cannot face. To me that was also very interesting. In relation to something else, which is a relation of that to the everyday, and the registers of emotions which are something we have talked about here as well. There were a number of speakers here at the workshop who talked about the things they say they haven’t discussed elsewhere, which tells us very clearly about normativity around the say-able, around the communicable. And that goes for a whole range of emotions, so this raises an interesting question for me about norms, emotions, what we cannot face, what we cannot say, and how we process things to say them in certain ways we do.

**Patricia Clough:** Totally I love that.

**Ann Cvetkovich:** I guess I was hearing “walking beside” a little differently -- as an alternative to a more conventional therapeutic relationship, and, specifically, talk therapy. Although maybe it’s not an alternative to psychoanalysis, where one doesn’t actually sit face to face with the therapist. My work on oral history has led me think about these issues. Although I haven’t done training as a therapist, I feel that I get to have something like a therapeutic relationship with people I’m interviewing. In the craft of conversation, I’m often working side by side with people who are more like me than different. But I also like to mix it up in order to



socialize the encounter with the self -- across generations, across race -- rather than letting it remain a solo process.

**Patricia Clough:** Yes, yes.

**Ann Cvetkovich:** —and the work of decolonizing the self is a project that looks very different depending on one's social location. In many ways, I can only speak for what it's like to be a white person trying to learn to have a different relation to my own history, but that also entails having a different relation to other people, including people of colour. And sometimes this affective work happens in a register that resembles that of listening to sounds rather than words. Asking how something feels can be like tuning in to frequencies, and there are sometimes secret or subterranean forms of communication between brown people or people who share a minoritarian culture.<sup>57</sup> As a white person, I ask: 'What does it mean to try to tune in to that frequency?' This can be very difficult work, because you might not be invited—

**Patricia Clough:** Not you.

**Ann Cvetkovich:** Well, you might be eavesdropping, or illicitly forging a bond. And what is it like to have access? Our academic landscape become much more diverse over the course of my lifetime in both the US, where I live, and Canada, where I was born and raised and continue to visit. (And there are significant variations between the two, as there are also with Sweden.) What does it mean right now to be a white person in the diversifying academy, including being able to take advantage of the opportunity to listen in on conversations that are not always really meant for you? In Canada, the protocols for white people and indigenous people doing work together can be quite stringent. It is worth paying attention to whether one is invited or not as part of the work of decolonizing methods and decolonizing history.<sup>58</sup>

**Patricia Clough:** Totally so— and there are two things I want to say. Primarily it is very important that the performance has music and singing and dance, because there are all kinds of ways besides words that things get done in those

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<sup>57</sup> Muñoz, J. E. (2006). 'Feeling brown, feeling down: Latina affect, the performativity of race, and the depressive position,' *Signs* 31.3: 675-88.

<sup>58</sup> Haig-Brown, C. (2009). 'Decolonizing diaspora: whose traditional land are we on?' *Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry* 1.1: 4-21.

performances, and preparing for them and in doing them. It's just spaces that are out of everybody's, each one of our control; there is something that happens all over the place—all around us. The second thing I wanted to comment on is our possibility to face things. I must say, even as a therapist, that there are some things that one can't face. I mean, after a hundred years of trying to face things I still can't, so sometimes when I think 'why can't I just face that?' So I think there is a way we don't know ourselves, never mind the *other*. So there should be respect for these breakdowns, and performances of these breakdowns whatever that might mean, instead of the assumption 'Yes, I did understand'. No way!

And in some ways I mean walking beside as to let be a rhythm of knowing and not knowing, communicating and failing. I think you put it very well, the questions are hard and part of what it is to ask about the learning process now in our classrooms, for sure in the United States.

**Gabriele Griffin:** Can I shift to methods? Because I think one of the really interesting things about this workshop has been this sort of emergence of experimental methodology. And I want to ask you about the relation between that and, if you like, a neo-liberal sensibility, because it seems to me to have been an interesting rise, or concomitant rise, of neo-liberalism and experimental methods. But I want to know what you think—

**Patricia Clough:** I think it's concomitant, as much as it may be edgy for all of us ... It's part of the transformation. I mean from my point of view I don't know how the academic world is surviving. But it isn't actually, without images and sound, and the digital is allowing for all of these kinds of expressions that are going to become required. So I feel like we are in a transitional moment, where some of us are doing this, that go 'wow' when, in fact, there is no student any more that is going to present without an interesting PowerPoint. Not an ordinary one, but an *interesting* one. Even more and more dissertations will become digitally enhanced. I have just read a dissertation, 190 pages of really experimental writing on a subject that I can't imagine would have gotten through once—and now it has. And digital has made this possible because it has made experimentation with writing possible.

So I don't know ... And all of this stuff about how much we are inside neo-liberalism or can be never outside of it, or whether experiment is ever from the outside? Or if it's just cutting or shifting ... It's behind your question, are we, like, ahead of the times? Or part of the times? Or in the times—?

**Gabriele Griffin:** Yeah.

**Ann Cvetkovich.** Well, experimental method, including making more room for feelings, can definitely be a case of what Lauren Berlant calls cruel optimism.<sup>59</sup> Anders [Johansson] was asking me last night if I am continuing to explore the mood of political depression or if I am pursuing other affective moods, including happier ones? My current project on the sovereignty of the senses arises from the desire to continue to figure out how to survive in the face of political depression – including living with it. And I continue to use personal and experimental methods, however contaminated, to do that work. Quoting from Audre Lorde, I make the point that that there are no new ideas, only new ways of making them felt. That’s why I emphasize common sense because the work of antiracism and anti-capitalism is at some level just that.<sup>60</sup> [Laughter]

**Gabriele Griffin:** But it’s also a very interesting materialization of emotion, knitting things, producing images, and so on. If you look through what people are doing, then they are materializing emotion in interesting ways.

**Ann Cvetkovich:** Yes, I would say people have manifested this knowledge in multiple ways and for a long time. So what does it mean to bring it into the academy? As always there is plenty of room for domestication – or normalization – of alternative practices. Is education ultimately always a neo-liberal disciplinary apparatus of the state? How far does a radical critique of school need to go? I think you can go pretty far actually. I’ve learned a lot about indigenous education in Canada from family members who work in that field, and some of the most radical work on rethinking school is happening there, as well as in New Zealand/Aotearoa. Indigenous languages and practices are being revived, and people are developing new kinds of curriculum, including alternative forms of pedagogy that take place outside of conventional classrooms and buildings. Conventional classrooms in which students learn native languages can stand alongside conversations with elders about plants and land that take place outdoors and in site-specific locations.<sup>61</sup>

**Patricia Clough:** So I thought you said this morning, after that interesting moment, when Angelica Sjöstedt Landén<sup>62</sup> brought up the initiative... the—

**Gabriele Griffin:** The Utopia—?<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Berlant, L. (2010). *Cruel Optimism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

<sup>60</sup> Lorde, A. (1984). ‘Poetry is not a luxury,’ *Sister Outsider*. Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press.

<sup>61</sup> Haig-Brown, C. and Haig-Brown, H. (2008). *Pelq’ilq: Coming Home*. Videotape.

<sup>62</sup> Angelika Sjöstedt-Landén, Mid Sweden University, Sweden

**Patricia Clough:** The Utopia moment, which was like... it was you know, a shocking kind of juxtaposition. And I wanted to say to you, 'Wow, that was an interesting moment and I want to hold it to my heart'. Maybe we should go back to thinking about really trusting our feelings? I do think there is something really, really important about feelings and emotions in our lives, and I do think that neo-liberalism is way on top of it. I mean, they've got it all. But still I think—and that's why I love when you said that about Utopia—that there is much to be gained by trying to understand feelings and emotions in relationship to our work, and relationship to teaching, and relationship to school. And I just do, I just think that from knowing so much, how difficult emotions are to know, and how blinding they can be, and how they can make us so hateful towards others and how they can be displaced onto others. I also think it is our responsibility to notice the speeds of co-optation and to learn how to be— to dodge a little, and to see that and to play with that, and not get too content with thinking you are edgy.

**Gabriele Griffin:** Okay. Ulrika?

**Ulrika Schmauch:** I'm thinking about neo-liberalism and experimental methods, and some of us were talking about it during lunch. Who has actually got the possibility to be experimental? We were for example talking about positions, and a lot of us in this room and in academia don't have permanent positions. And I can just speak for myself, that now that I have a permanent position, I can do kind of experimental work and I can talk about my feelings if I want to. But before that, I needed to be a good academic and publish. Well, I didn't publish, but I was supposed to publish. Now I teach full-time and I think it would be very difficult for me to have the time 'to walk side by side'. And I think it would be very difficult for me to have funding to have the time to do that.

**Patricia Clough:** I had no funding and I was teacher full-time when I was doing the walking. It just seemed like a necessity to me at the time.

**Ulrika Schmauch:** Yes, but who has that necessity? I could probably spend it in some way—

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<sup>63</sup> Utopia is a recently built shopping mall in downtown Umeå, the building of which was very controversial because an older house was pulled down to make way for it amidst much protest from the local population who were not convinced that more shopping facilities were needed or indeed that the older house should be pulled down. Hence the name 'Utopia' is somewhat ironic.

**Patricia Clough:** I do think your question is worth thinking about.

**Ulrika Schmauch:** Yeah, and because I think with this, I don't remember who said it before, that we are talking about emotions, but we have stopped talking about experiences and about experiences of oppression and marginalization. We are talking more about how it feels to need this? In a sense. And it's... it's itching—

**Patricia Clough:** I love that you said that, because I would have said the same thing. I got tenure without writing, because I couldn't write the way I was told to. I just couldn't. It wasn't until after tenure that I found a way to write differently. No one would get tenure any more on my record. You wouldn't be able to get it anywhere in the United States, but I lived in the last moments of some other regime. So I love that you said 'I didn't publish', because I think I find students who are really fragile, and should not be doing this kind of work, who say to me that they can do something else. So they are lucky they find someone like me, or Ann, to support them.

I'm not trying to get away from your political question, a masochism, can I do that and get tenure? And the answer is no. Can I do that before tenure? I doubt it. When did you start doing it? Did you do it after tenure? Yes, and you know... so all that's true, it's all true, and I'm still in an environment where my work is suspicious to my colleagues, and that students who work with me can have a real problem in my department. So for all the neo-liberalism, in the academy it is still troublesome to work like this, but I do. So yeah—it is a great question about who gets the right to do this or how do we get to do it? But I don't know, I think you *can* find ways to do it.

**Ulrika Schmauch:** Because I was commenting on a text couple of months ago, and she is writing about the middle class in the academy. And the people she interviewed were talking about these seemingly religious and spiritual moments where they sort of knew what the student was going to say before he said it because they were so connected. And we were talking about that you can have these kinds of... yeah, they were really clever these guys, or thought they were, but we were talking about that it's allowed to say those things about spirituality and feeling, and so on, if you are in a very secure position. And I think that if you go into academe and 'Feeling Like a Fraud'<sup>64</sup>, you probably wouldn't say it, you would probably at times feel very spiritual, but you would probably shut up.

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<sup>64</sup> See Jönsson and Rådström in this volume.

**Ann Cvetkovich:** Well, I guess that's what we are trying to track, right? I get asked the question about experimental method as privilege a lot, and each time it comes up, I try to take it as symptomatic, as a sign that this work seems to strike a chord for some people. It's like a little door opens for them but it also feels like it can get shut very quickly. That's why I said earlier that my work was not experimental, but in fact quite simple or common-sensical. I like having my workshop on experimental writing programmed alongside the panel about rural women's health today.<sup>65</sup> That project seems to engage in quite conventional or straightforward forms of social science research that traffics in population demographics and statistics. But something as simple and yet elegant as asking women about their feelings can be included in the list of research questions. I don't think that's experimental, although it may be radical. And, of course, it can also be recuperated in all kinds of different ways.

My answer would be somewhat similar to what Patricia has said — that I have come to somewhat unorthodox projects because it was the only way I could write or do the work. And it's true that I am able to do that because I have a lot of privilege and come from an elite education. But I can still be amazed that I am able to do the kind of work that I do — and that I'm sitting here today!

We were talking about performance in the everyday and about raising queer children. I'm trying to teach to my students to look at their own stories and see how they were normed into gender. They can't do that. They just can't do it. So that means we have some work to do, because it's not a complicated practice, and yet it is because the resistance to that knowledge is tremendous. It's another form of normalization that is killing people. My students, who are ordinary queer or LGBT young people, are all concerned about queer bullying, for example, because they sense that it applies to them even if they didn't experience its most extreme forms. We did some work on disability, and many of them came out as having mental health issues. Does that correlate with queerness? I think it probably does. And it meant that some of them had a hard time making it through the class, or even just doing the reading. So what tools can I give them? Sometimes I was unable to do more than ask them to think about a couple of questions. And again, there is nothing experimental about that. That's just trying to give people some survival skills.

**Patricia Clough:** No, it's like in Beverly Leipert's expression during the workshop on raising the unconscious, not conscious-raising. But sometimes the depths have to be raised to remember how you were socialized into something, because it's all that conscious.

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<sup>65</sup> See Nyhlén, Leipert and Gillander Gådin in this volume.

**Gabriele Griffin:** Yeah, Beverly raised her hand. So Beverly, do you want to make a comment?

**Beverly Leipert<sup>66</sup>:** Well, just sitting and listening, I think a lot of issues have been raised and I've been making some notes: What is science? What counts as science? What counts as knowledge that has implications for method? I think it was Sara Harding that spoke: Whose science? Whose knowledge? So who does the science? Who owns the data? If you are doing research with Aboriginal people in Canada, they control the data. They will tell you that right up front: 'You can't publish without our permission. You can't present any of this data unless we give you the permission to do that.' This is partly because of their history. They have been researched to death, and they want control for this now. What questions are asked? And where this data is going to go? It's about power. Is it women interviewing men? Men interviewing women? Who is asking the questions? What we are talking about is actually very, very complex, and I don't think that there is any one answer to any of it. It depends on who? What? When? Why? Of what we are doing in terms of the research.

I think we unpack that in the different ways, and locations of where we are in terms of our careers, in terms of our age, in terms of our view of the world. It's very complex, either our privilege or not, our past experience or not; I just think it's muddy.

**Patricia Clough:** It's a struggle over science.

**Beverly Leipert:** It's muddy, and I think that's just the way it is. I think that's partly because in the academy we have such struggles because it isn't black and white, or it shouldn't be. Sometimes it's officially imposed on us as researchers by the system—*this* is how many articles. Sometimes it isn't said how many articles you need to have published in order to get, for example, a tenure promotion. And we know that for women it tends to be many more than for men. So I think it's complex, and it's muddy, and these are things we have to think about when we do research. Who's doing this? What group? Who owns the data? What power do I have? How do we equalize or try to equalize power? All those things. What kind of trust do I have with those folks? Have I worked with him before? How comfortable do they feel with me? And me with them? All of those things, it's just, it's very—

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<sup>66</sup> Beverly Leipert, University of Western Ontario, Canada.

**Gabriele Griffin:** As a final, concluding remark in the discussion, we are suggesting seeing complexity as resource.

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