

# akademisk academic quarter

Aalborg Universitet  
tidsskrift for humanistisk forskning



Volume 03 12 • 2011

Transgression Now : *Charlie Blake and Steen Christiansen* ∫ The Transgressive Posture : *Peter Lemish* ∫ The Rise of the Underground : *Moulay Driss El Maarouf* ∫ Demokrati som transgression : *Martin Bak Jørgensen og Óscar García Agustín* ∫ Teaching against the Tide : *Camille Alexander* ∫ Forsøgs- og udviklingsarbejde i grundskolen som transgressiv praksis : *Christian Ydesen og Karen E. Andreasen* ∫ "Hvor viljen er lov og fornuften i eksil" : *Johan Heinsen* ∫ Dolphins Who Blow Bubbles : *Catherine Lord* ∫ Icons of Transgression : *Bent Sørensen* ∫ The Star Wars Kid and the Bedroom Intruder : *Jørgen Riber Christensen* ∫ Transgression and Taboo : *Jens Kirk* ∫ Flirting with the Law : *Alla Ivanchikova* ∫ En grænse for transgressionen? : *Mikkel Jensen* ∫ Does the Porn Star Blush? : *Charlie Blake and Beth Johnson* ∫ Transgression as Tragic Typology : *Mia Rendix* ∫ Religion in Scandinavian Crime Fiction : *Kim Toft Hansen* ∫ Ontologisk transgression i *Adaptation* : *Helle Thorsøe Nielsen* ∫ Genre transgression in interactive works : *Claus A. Foss Rosenstand* ∫ Grænseoverskridende multi-protagonistfortællinger • *Helle Kannik Haastrup* ∫ The Transgressive Literacy of the Comic Maidservant in Tobias Smollett's *Humphry Clinker* : *Kathleen Alves* ∫ Food for thought : *Ida Klitgård* ∫ Body Refractions : *Steen Christiansen* ∫

# essionstrangre



Akademisk kvarter  
Tidsskrift for humanistisk forskning

Academic Quarter  
Journal for humanistic research

Redaktører / Issue editors  
Charlie Blake & Steen Christiansen

Ansvarshavende redaktører / Editors in chief  
Jørgen Riber Christensen & Kim Toft Hansen

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Tidsskriftsdesign og layout / Journal design and layout:  
Kirsten Bach Larsen

ISSN 1904-0008

Yderligere information / Further information:  
<http://akademiskkvarter.hum.aau.dk/>

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## Transgression Now

Revolt – its face distorted by amorous ecstasy – tears from God his naive mask, and thus oppression collapses in the crash of time. Catastrophe is that by which a nocturnal horizon is set ablaze – it is time released from all bonds. (Bataille, 1985, p.134)

Transgression... is like a flash of lightning in the night which, from the beginning of time, gives a dense and black intensity to the night it denies, which lights up the night from the inside, from top to bottom, and yet owes to the dark the stark clarity of its manifestation its harrowing and poised singularity. (Foucault, 1998, p.28)

To transgress, according to Michel Foucault's reflections on Georges Bataille and sexuality from his 1963 essay 'A Preface to Transgression,' is to cross a border, a line, a limit, or a boundary. Alternatively, and in a more extended and possibly occult sense, and *pace* some of Foucault's intellectual contemporaries, it is to reconfigure what might otherwise be an *aporia*, whether sensual, erotic, textual, intellectual, emotional, ethical, political, material, metaphysical or aesthetic, and open it up for what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari would later describe, in the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizo-*

*phrenia*, as deterritorialization. As is well known, deterritorialization for these thinkers, as both process and emergence, is invariably paired with the notion of reterritorialization, and this is particularly so in what has come to be known after Frederic Jameson as late capitalism and its (possibly) now outdated cultural corollary in postmodernism.

Importantly, the process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization that the word 'transgression' in this context could be argued as evoking, and whether in critical theory, philosophy, art or popular culture, is not merely about breaking rules or defying conventions as has sometimes and somewhat romantically and reductively been assumed. Such assumptions do, of course, have their reference points and justifications. Some of these reference points are well known: for instance, the broadly Franco-centric and generally male legacy of D.A.F. Sade, Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Lautréamont, Dada and Surrealism, Antonin Artaud, Bataille, Jean Genet, the Lettrists and Situationists and Foucault himself.<sup>1</sup> Other reference points include the charismatic influence of various distaff Anglophone figures such as Oscar Wilde, Aleister Crowley, Andy Warhol, Kathy Acker and William Burroughs, or the Viennese *actionists*, performance art globally, and the mid twentieth century emergence from African-American music of certain rock and roll stars with all their brazen sonic populism, intricate allusion, multiple epigones and self-consciously decadent analogues in hip hop, electronica, metal, or industrial and gothic music and culture (Blake, 2009, pp.76-90). These are, at least, some of the main coordinates for transgression as concept and performance. However, if transgression is based at least in part upon breaking rules, it is of course necessary for there to be rules to break, boundaries to be crossed, lines to be redrawn, opposing forces or sensations without which it would be meaningless as both act and idea. Transgression does not happen in a void, nor does it emerge *ex nihilo* from some flow of metaphysical desire or quasi-virtuality. In that sense every transgression is also a conflict or agon emerging from a facticity, from a body or bodies, from a space of confinement or containment, as Foucault and before him Bataille were acutely aware. It is a conflict that may, moreover, under the right circumstances, and if pursued in the right spirit, generate a spark of novelty and thus provide a flash of vivid illu-

mination against a canvas of darkness where before there was only a listless grey conformity of action and reaction, of habit, of convention, of dialectic and binarism, of a yes and a no.

In this understanding of transgression as Chris Jenks has so vividly outlined, where there is a clash of two opposed elements or forces, whether contraries or contradictions, there is no longer any moment of sublation, no *aufhebung* as in Hegelian or post-Hegelian thought, no representation as such. Instead, and as a result of a differential between velocities or modes of expression there is an explosion of force itself: a detonating flower of force and multiplicity that opens up its petals and tendrils and blossoms instantly into new networks of communication and expansion, new forms of libidinal economy and encounter, new patterns of semiosis and dissipation. It is for this reason, perhaps, that the image of the lightning flash so often recurs in illustrations of transgression and its variants in both critical thought and popular culture, and is invariably, in the former domain anyway, implicitly attached to related images of disturbances in time and space, in difference and identity, in continuity and discontinuity. The lightning flash is an image, moreover, and importantly, of rupture, penetration, fissure or charge – of a coupling and uncoupling of intensities – rather than as a measure of causality, consistency or linkage *per se*.

Thus, for instance, in Deleuze's seminal pre-Guattari study of difference and repetition from 1968, we encounter the curiously gothic figure of the 'dark precursor' who, like the strange attractors of chaos theory, both presages and configures becomings by reading the trajectory of thought backwards, not merely as inversion or reversal, but as multiplicity. Here, then, we discover in a discussion of the role of difference in repetition for itself that the illumination is about *communication*:

...what is this agent, this force which ensures communication? Thunderbolts explode between different intensities, but they are preceded by an invisible, imperceptible dark precursor, which determines their path in advance but in reverse, as though intagliated. (Deleuze, 1994, p.119)

As with Bataille (whom Deleuze, interestingly, barely mentions here or elsewhere), the moment of transgression is also the mo-

ment of difference. But where Deleuze will take difference into the realms of virtuality, creation, experimentation and the event as transformation within a univocal realm of multiplicity, for Bataille, difference is bound up with the primal forces of eroticism and death, absolute expenditure and sacrifice, and in this he reveals his debt to Sade as much as to Nietzsche, (the Sade, of course, whose own Justine, notably, meets her death in a lightning strike not once, but twice). Bearing this image of the zig zag flash of transgression in mind (which, in the case of Deleuze and Guattari, might be more accurately rendered as transversality, or as Deleuze puts it in relation to Spinoza, the 'witch's path,' in that transgression *per se* is not central to their project), (Deleuze, 1988, p.1) it might also be fair to claim, as Nick Land has suggested, that the retrospective notion of Bataille as a 'philosopher of transgression' has little or no justification considering the sparse use of the term itself in his work (Land, 1992, p. 63). However, as Benjamin Noys has also argued in response to Land's observation, a strong and reasonable claim can be made, nonetheless, that transgression, whether named or not, is consistently operative as a technique of *opening* throughout Bataille's writings (Noys, 2000, p. 9), whether critical and fictional, and it is in this sense, as well as in its sense of charge or fissure or communication, that the concept of transgression has travelled via figures such Foucault, Jean Baudrillard and others into the broader cultural conversation of late capitalism.

For Bataille, the essence of transgression is that it is in a perpetual conflict with taboo, in that without taboo there *could* be no transgression. There is no pure transgressive force in Bataille: transgression is always in tension with prohibition in one way or another, or as Foucault puts it:

Transgression is an action which involves limit, that narrow zone of a line where it displays the flash of its passage, but perhaps also its entire trajectory, even its origin; it is likely that transgression has its entire space in the line that it crosses.(Foucault, 1998, p.27)

This spatialized compression of transgression and taboo into a 'harrowing' singularity raises a number of questions about the dura-

tional aspect of this 'flash' that remain as central to the transgressive moment as the deliberate challenge such moments supposedly make to the norms and conventions of the culture in which they are enacted. On this point, some of the examples of transgression that Bataille indicates in his *Eroticism* are not entirely what one might expect in terms of transgressive convention. Transgression here as elsewhere is, of course, intimately related to other Bataillan themes such as laughter, intoxication, cruelty, sacrifice, blood, vomit and other bodily fluids, the sacred, the impossible, anguish and death, but in terms of eroticism itself, we find that, perhaps surprisingly, marital sex is considered as transgressive. The argument here indicates something central to Bataille's notion of transgression, in that for him marriage becomes a site in which the taboo against non-reproductive erotic experience is given a stage, and is in this sense a violation in spite of the formal conventions observed, as human sacrifice or killing an opponent in a war might operate in a society which ostensibly objects to the killing of human beings. (Bataille, 1991, pp 123-128). Thus while on a personal level for Bataille, an erotic act with both its excess of *joissance* and its undertow of post-coital anguish sensitizes the participants to the fundamental duality between continuity (through reproduction, say) and discontinuity (death or *la petit mort*), what this also signals is the cultural or societal tension between homogeneity and heterogeneity as this related tension plays out not only in rituals of sacrifice and exclusion or expulsion or scapegoating as these specify the limits of the profane and the excess of the sacred, but also in the mechanized and industrial cruelties of, for example, fascism and by extension more contemporary and politically driven atrocity and mass murder. (Bataille, 1983, pp. 137-160). This further indicates Bataille's broader political trajectory, initially built upon by Foucault and subsequently dematerialized by Jacques Derrida, (Derrida, 1978, pp. 251-277), in which a general economy, a solar economy of absolute excess and expenditure and transgression is opposed to the restricted economy of modern capitalism. It is here that Bataille's analysis becomes both contemporary and contentious, for as a number of commentators have noted, the form of late capitalism that characterizes the early twenty first century is very much based on notions of pointless expenditure and excess as it is on reckless accumulation, on extravagant waste as much as on order or regulation, on relentless and



deliberate 'transgressive' hedonism as much as on the sober morality that might once have been associated with the capitalist system. Thus, as Noys has summarised, there are critics such as Joseph Goux who claim that Bataille's analysis and transgressive strategy is no longer applicable, whilst others such as Baudrillard argue that capitalism has effectively become Bataillan in its solar extravagance. (Noys, 2000, p.122).

From this perspective, the transition between an economy based on production as in Fordism or Five Year Plans to one based on consumption has parallels with the idea of a transition between the disciplinary societies anatomized by Foucault and the control society as mapped out so persuasively in relation to Foucault by Deleuze in his seminal essay, "Postscript on Control Societies" from 1990. In this later model, as Mark Fisher has so eloquently elaborated in his polemical study, *Capitalist Realism: Is there an Alternative?* the anti-capitalist movement(s) are always already formulated by a radically de-centred and strategically absent capitalist Other to the extent that the notion of there even being an 'alternative,' a form of transgression that can *actually* transgress, has been turned into a kind of spin on the notion of rebellion and revolution as fashion accessories or as video game distractions rather than acts of ethical or political engagement. Thus Fisher writes of the tragic figure of Kurt Cobain of Nirvana as marking an end point to the possibility of transgression in its more classical sense as follows:

In his dreadful lassitude and objectless rage, Cobain seemed to give wearied voice to the despondency of the generation that had come after history, whose every move was anticipated, tracked, bought and sold before it had even happened. Cobain knew that he was just another piece of spectacle, that nothing runs better on MTV than a protest against MTV; knew that every move was a cliché scripted in advance, knew that even realizing it is a cliché. (Fisher, 2011, p.9)

If Cobain's death marks, as Simon Reynolds and other have suggested, the final moment in which the *zeit* had or could have any kind of *geist*, then it might well be argued that we have reached a stage of post-transgression or transgression fatigue in a culture of

twenty first century exhaustion equivalent to the decadence ushered in by Nietzsche's typically untimely image of the last man. Indeed, such imprisonment and paralysis in the eternal now of late capitalism in which shock has become a deliquescent commodity and the extreme a form of nothing more challenging than entertainment and diversion poses significant challenges to the idea of transgression as it has been historically configured. Accordingly, as the essays in this volume indicate, as much attention needs currently to be given to the *use* of transgression in a variety of contexts, as to its broader significance within a theoretical framework and the contradictions inherent in its evolving legacy. Bearing these complexities as they circle around the notion of transgression and the post-transgressive in mind, it is worth noting briefly some of the characteristics that Bataille in particular associated with transgression as it is discussed in this collection. Centrally for Bataille, the act of transgression implies both a taboo that the subject is aware of and an act that is intentional in some sense. Secondly, the act of transgression opens the subject out to the continuity and discontinuity that become so acute in moments of erotic intensity or extreme violence, and this requires on some level an opening out to death as the determining affect and effect of desire, expression and personal ontology. Thirdly, the act of transgression requires a loss of self and a shattered delirium of personal identity in which a multiplicity of selves can emerge and reconfigure. Fourthly, whilst it is clearly connected with the 'ordinary' sense of transgression, as in the transgression of laws, mores, moral strictures and structures and so forth, the term also connotes an immanence that hints mockingly at the powerlessness of what it positions as a transcendent 'fiction' of authority, whether that transcendent is considered to be masquerading as God, truth or morality – or under late capitalism, aesthetic convention.

Finally, then, and as an instrument of transformation and adaptation, and however playful or nihilistic its expression, transgression poses an existential challenge to the notion of the human as a bounded, productive, rational and instrumental creature in a homogenous culture, replacing that notion with one of consumption, waste and fundamental dissipation and in doing so, tracing out a line between the human, the inhuman and the spiritual, sexual and material 'catastrophe' of the atheological divine, de-

graded and transfigured, endlessly and immanently, by the ecstasy of annihilation.

Considering this trajectory of the uses (or should one rather speak of the abuses?) of transgression, we can identify a number of clusters. Broadly speaking, there is a tendency to either use transgression in a socio-political context (identifying practices which move beyond the permissible or social norms), locating transgression in cultural practices (the ways we interact with the world) and finally in aesthetic practices (moving beyond the norms and conventions created by the fiction of authority). If we begin with what is maybe the broadest application of transgression as ways of overreaching taboos, we find that **Peter Lemish's** article *The Transgressive Posture* signals precisely this notion of reaching across the acceptable social boundaries of a very sensitive field: the Israel-Arab conflict and argues that only through a transgressive posture, which Lemish develops from Heidegger, can the playing field be levelled.

The same act of reaching across social boundaries is discussed in **Moulay Driss El Maarouf's** article *The Rise of the Underground* where he develops what he refers to as the politics of excrementality; a way to articulate ways of resistance through dirty-mindedness. The music festival, in this case specifically Morocco but conceivably at work everywhere, with its carnivalesque mood becomes a site for vulgar and profane performances not simply from the musicians themselves but from the participants of the festival, which may then engender a community of transgression. The same kind of inclusive understanding is developed in the article *Demokrati som transgression* by **Martin Bak Jørgensen & Óscar García Agustín** who argue from Jacques Rancière's position that democracy is only achievable when those who are usually excluded are included. Focussing specifically on Denmark's immigration policies and how these are challenged by transgressive groups which attempt to resist neo-liberal discursive closure of the public sphere. In the same vein, we find transgression in what is perhaps an unlikely place; the classroom and educational practices. Two articles emphasize the need for transgression in education. The first, **Camille Alexander's** *Teaching Against the Tide* suggests that transgressing a canonical syllabus becomes a way of creating a contact zone between students and professors, thereby increasing students' learning and engagement in classes. Much in the same spirit but with a broader focus

**Karen E. Andreasen and Christian Ydesen** discuss the history of school education in Denmark in their article *Forsøgs- og udviklingsarbejde i grundskolen som transgressiv praksis*. Here, they show the historical development of transgressive practices in the Danish elementary school, revealing how government control alongside political currents shape these experiments as much as educators themselves. Another historical transgression of a quite different kind is found in **Johan Heinsen's** article *Hvor viljen er lov og fornuften i eksil*, where we see how the retelling of a historical incident – Sir Francis Drake executing Thomas Doughty in 1578 – engages in establishing the boundaries of community and the limits of historiography in connection with the seafaring communities. The marginalized outsider, in this case John Cooke, becomes the means to both challenge and establish these boundaries.

Heinsen's article also allows us to trace a shift; a shift from the more politically oriented readings of transgression (how are boundaries established) to how these boundaries are negotiated in a diversity of cultural practices. One example of this is **Catherine Lord**, who in *Dolphins Who Blow Bubbles* shows how a documentary film may become transgressive in the practices it exposes and the ways the film forces us to engage with both cultural thresholds and animal-human thresholds. In much the same way, **Bent Sørensen's** article *Icons of Transgression* argues that iconic images may transgress normality by challenging stereotypical images of unity and wholesomeness. Through a reading of images of Charles Manson and Patty Hearst, Sørensen shows how viewers may turn from consumers into worshippers. **Jørgen Riber Christensen's** article *Star Wars Kid and the Bedroom Intruder* looks at how people may unexpectedly become icons of the Internet, through a transgression of the private sphere. Surveillance and celebrity is revealed to be bound together with a disciplinary effect, at the same time that these moments may also have a subversive function. Other transgressions on the Internet are discussed by **Jens Kirk** in his article *Transgression and Taboo*, where he argues that fan fiction is a genre which transgresses readers' favourite source texts in order to produce their own fiction, thereby changing readers from consumers to producers. At the same time, certain boundaries of the source texts must also be upheld, so that a fundamental distinction between fan and author may be maintained.

With Kirk's argument, we also see that aesthetic practices become part of the cultural practices where transgression plays a part. One example of this combination of cultural and aesthetic practices is found in lesbian cinema, discussed in **Alla Ivanchikova's** article *Flirting with the Law*, where Ivanchikova investigates notions of law outside the heteronormative, where the viewer is invited to flirt with the law and the law is no longer regarded as heteronormative. A similar interest in the normative, although in a different manner, is broached by **Mikkel Jensen** in his article *En grænse for transgressionen?* in which Jensen looks at different kinds of transgression; social or personal, finding that transgression becomes a way of self-development but also holds the risk of serving as an empty act. A more philosophically-oriented discussion of transgression and the heteronormative comes in **Charlie Blake** and **Beth Johnson's** article *Does the Porn Star Blush?*, where they discuss ideas of post-transgression in the representation of explicit sexual acts in film, where non-pornographic modes of representation may point towards a search for authenticity in the cinematic image.

We find a different way of using transgression in **Mia Rendix's** article *Transgression as Tragic Typology*, where Rendix argues that American tragedy differs in kind from the European tragedy. American tragedy insists on a dual nature where cosmic harmony may be shattered and recreated through apocalyptic transgressions. A similar focus on the cosmic can be found in **Kim Toft Hansen's** article *Religion in Scandinavian Crime Fiction*, where Hansen argues that crime fiction in Scandinavia is moving towards becoming a post-secular genre, which on the one hand discusses and engages with modernity, yet at the same time opens up for discussion (and critique) of religion and spirituality, thereby transgressing modernity's own ideals. A related concern for ontological divisions are found in **Helle Thorsøe Nielsen's** article *Ontologisk transgression in Adaptation*, where Nielsen outlines a range of different types of transgression, with the intention of uncovering a range of different ways of destabilizing the ontology of a fiction – in this case Charlie Kaufman and Spike Jonze's *Adaptation*. Going further than meta-fictional transgression, Nielsen suggests several forms of reflexive transgression.

A similar formalist interest governs **Claus A. Foss Rosenstand's** article *Genre Transgression in Interactive Works*, where Rosenstand ar-

gues for the genre transgression of interactive works as creating what he refers to as the simulative genre, characterized by the transformation of the communicator into a simulator, thus creating a framework for analysing any interactive text. **Helle Kannik Hastrup's** article *Grænseoverskridende multi-protagonistfortællinger* discusses the generic reformations of complex artfilm strategies which migrate into popular film with the coming of the multi-protagonist film, where the traditional narrative structures of Hollywood are altered and remade. **Kathleen Alves'** article *The Transgressive Literacy of the Comic Maidservant in Tobias Smollett's Humphry Clinker* returns us to social tensions by discussing the "servant problem" in Tobias Smollett's *Humphry Clinker*, where servants are revealed to not exist as external subjects but instead as attendants in the discursive formation of the modern family. **Ida Klitgård's** article *Food For Thought* is a comparative analysis the Danish translations of James Joyce's *Ulysses* particularly as it pertains to the significance of food, enhanced into a discussion of cannibalistic and religious metaphors. Klitgård's analysis shows how cultural cannibalism inevitably becomes part of such a discussion. **Steen Christiansen's** article *Body Refractions* examines Darren Aronofsky's *Black Swan* and the notions of character identification and bodily transformation, arguing that the digital morphing of *Black Swan* suggests a different relation to the cinematic image, one which can only be understood in terms of affect rather than representation.

As we can see from this broad and diverse range of scholarship, despite a certain degree of transgression fatigue, the term remains critically viable and if nothing else maintains an openness to other alternatives, even as they strain to find their form.

## Notes

- 1 One should not, of course, forget the centrality of at least three non-French thinkers eagerly absorbed by the French intellectual modernist tradition – Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud and Lewis Carroll – to many if not most of the significant currents of transgression in 20th century thought and culture.

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## The Transgressive Posture

### Insights from Nano Discourse into the Ontology of Being a Transgressor

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A humanist living amidst economic injustice, violence, discrimination, and oppression is in a situation ripe for transgression. Whether hegemonic forces are advancing profits, national security, God's word, self, or a combination of all of the above, those whose guiding vision is to realize equality and who are, therefore, deeply concerned about the fate of all others, are likely to be challenged, incessantly, to transgress that society's social norms and laws. In such a situation, I contend, humanists chose to assume an ever-vigilant *transgressive posture* given their sense of the omnipresent necessity to resist infusions of inhumane hegemonic forces into every cell of social life. In exploring the nature of such an aptitude and how it evolves, this essay aims to advance development of a grounded theory of transgression by illuminating aspects of the ontology of transgression in everyday life. Explorations of this larger project are presented through analysis of four autobiographical *nano discourse* exchanges that contributed to the maturing of the author's transgressive posture when living as an engaged humanist academic-activist in Israel-Palestine (1983-2008; n. b., this presentation deals only with the early stages of the author's academic career there).

## Problematizing Transgression: Need for an Ontology of Transgression

The dynamics of transgression - as an act committed by an individual across laws as well as social norms, beliefs, and values- requires investigating matters of existence and action, ontology and praxeology. From ontology (an understanding of the nature of existence), we can ask, what is like to be a transgressor? From praxeology (i.e., action grounded in a vision for social change), how does one perform principled transgression? When linked, we can ask: What is the nature of the experience of performing transgression? How are our actions linked to our Being-a- transgressor? Is there a developmental dimension to Being-a-transgressor?

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger (1927/1952) investigated ontological authenticity - *Dasein*- and claimed that it involves Being-in-the world; that is, *Dasein* is not experienced alone but in social reality - *Mitsein* - - Being-with-Others-in-the-world (i.e., social ontology; Dreyfus, 1995; Olafson, 1998). Hence, *Dasein* and *Mitsein* evolve through mutually influential interactions, including establishing, respecting, and transgressing borders. Similarly, attempts to change social norms involve two derivative aspects of *mutuality* [mütō- to change]. First, change occurs through interactions between different communities or supporters and opponents of norms, values, rules, etc. that serve as social boundaries or laws ultimately transgressed. However, I submit that change efforts, including acts of transgression, take place, in ontological terms, in a third zone lying *in-between* borders. The change agent or transgressor enters this zone with their actions and, as a result, experiences social life in a manner significantly different from others who 'reside' [sic] within both borders. Figuratively, this space is separate, it exists in-between, in what I propose be referred to as the *hyphen* zone.

Second, major, minor, failed, or even misguided attempts at transgression involve mutuality in the form of reflecting upon and questioning social situations. Indeed, via Heidegger, Mannheim, Foucault, and Freire, we understand that reflecting on expressions of social knowledge and values can reveal power relations, alternative arrangements, and thus can be an empowering experience. Following Adorno, such *negative* questioning can reveal previous attempts to educate or impose, parochially, a sense that certain norms, values, beliefs, and so forth are immutable (i. e., forms of social engineering

and closed socialization). Thus, transgression is a contra-induction process that exposes attempts to inculcate false, ideological understandings of social reality. Such reflection and questioning are crucial processes in what eventually matures into what I propose be referred to as a *transgressive posture* through which the acts of transgression are eventually committed. Therefore, how the maturing transgressor begins and evolves into such a posture is crucial for understanding the ontology of transgression.

Thus, my general claim is that development of a grounded theory of transgression must be concerned with the nature of the transgressor experience as it will enable us to understand the dynamics, forces, and potentialities of the transgressive act. Indeed, transgression is an excellent opportunity to investigate the interface of self-authenticity, ethics, and action; that is, the experience of Self attempting to lead a moral life; here, from the humanist perspective (Bauman, 1973; Heidegger, 1977). Such inquiry was at the core of the work of Paulo Freire, a Brazilian critical social phenomenologist, who helped us understand the nature of *praxis*: actions undertaken through structural understanding and moral judgment. For example, praxis performance of transgression demonstrates that individuals can 'override' *closed socialization* when they choose to transgress the norms and rules of the social order in which they live. This may be seen as the ultimate form of humanist constructivism and demonstrates the importance of reflection and empowerment that evolves through such a process.

### **Language is knowledge-power:**

#### **The case of nano discourse**

The link between *Dasein* and language is key in both the ontology and praxeology of transgression. For example, Foucault's project involved tracing the roles discourse plays in the social processes of constructing, legitimating, and maintaining power relations and truths. He argued (1977, 1980) that power and knowledge are inter-related and discourse is a medium through which subjects produce and reflect power relations.

*Nano discourse* presented in this paper is an excellent example of the role of language and the potentialities of reflection on *knowledge-power* in illuminating the nature of social reality and, more specifically, the transgressive experience. I define this to be a micro-

communicative act, usually consisting of spontaneously-issued, two-three sentence exchanges between individuals that encapsulate, reflexively, a *weltanschauung* - a worldview or paradigm of thinking. Via Foucault [and Mannheim, below], nano discourse is a reflexive expression of macro-knowledge-power structures. The analysis of nano exemplars is, therefore, a hermeneutic exercise that reveals the reflexive ontological [Dasein] view of the world [Mitsein]. As such, nano discourse is a treasure trove of potential insights for understanding power-knowledge relations in a particular context; and, with reflection, they can play a crucial role in an evolving transgressive posture that is self-revealing and politically empowering. The analysis below seeks to demonstrate these claims in relation to an evolving transgressive posture and, thereby, contribute to development of a grounded theory of transgression.

### **Grounded Evidence of the Transgressive Posture**

Evidence in support of the claim that transgressive posture evolves through activists' everyday life experiences [*Dasein*-authenticity of self - evolves through social interaction, *Mitsein*] is presented through analyses of four nano discourse exchanges. The chronological presentation of these exemplars illuminates the evolving nature of this posture, though I am not advocating a linear development but rather a holistic praxis driven by the need for vigilance regarding violations of the fundamental principle of human equality. Two primary criteria were used to select these incidents from among numerous nano exemplars. First, through reflection at the time they provided *knowledge-power* insights into deep social structures, self, and action potentialities. That is, they demonstrate that social exchanges together with reflection can empower the transgressor, hence priming the activist for transgressive acts. Second, they assist in conceptualization of the evolution of the transgressive posture and experience.

To demonstrate these claims, I analyze each of the following nano cases via Karl Mannheim's (1924) "Documentary Method of Interpretation". Mannheim demonstrated that three interpretations are possible for every social act: *Objective* [descriptive statement of what happened, with whom, when, and where]; *Subjective* [explanations by participants and observers of why act took place]; and, *Documentary* [links the act, as a 'document' of and to deep social

structures]. *Descriptive and Subjective* interpretations are presented [in italics] through my reconstructions of nano discourse [bolded]. The *Documentary* interpretation that follows is my interpretation that relates the incident to deeper social structures and, more specifically, the evolving transgressive posture.

## 1. Border Framing

*My first year academic appointment at an Israeli research university in 1984 included teaching at a satellite campus located at the foot of the Nazareth Mountains. Accordingly, the College's student population is strongly representative of the area's majority Arab population. Breaks between class sessions in the College's faculty room were lively and informative about Israeli society. A geographer who is still an influential, multi-government insider was a leading Monday conversant. Discussing THE CONFLICT one evening [reference to Israeli-Arab Conflict], he led speculation in response to my question - what should Israel do differently? - by surveying all the actions possible in inter-ethnic, civil war situations; as he defined The Conflict. He concluded that Israel had made a fatal mistake in 1948 and since: "As we see today, exiling every last one of them [PL: Palestinians] is the best - no - the only solution; and until we do so, we will never succeed."*

*Documentary:* At the time, this opinion – increasingly popular in Israel in recent years - was rarely voiced in public. On reflection, then, this statement provided me with a 'border framing' of two important primary truths that continue to drive the Zionist Project: First, the foundational statement in the state's 1948 Declaration of Independence that Israel is a "Jewish and democratic" state is not a commitment to two equally weighted values, rather there is a clear priority: it must be first and foremost Jewish and, then, democratic. Second, the ideological demand to create a solely Jewish state of Israel drives conclusions from historical and social analyzes that lead "rational thinking [Jewish] Israelis" to accept multiple governments' actions taken in order to assure the state will continue to exist. These truths explain why clearly undemocratic policies and actions taken by the state against Palestinians living within and beyond Israel's

1948 borders – such as, post-1967 annexation of East Jerusalem and settlement activities in occupied Palestine, use of economic sanctions against residents of Gaza, the Wall, maintaining sub-standard living conditions and second class citizenship for Palestinians living in Israel – are rationalized and accepted by Jewish-Israelis across nearly the entire political spectrum.

*Transgression:* Born and educated in California, I first came to Israel as a non-Zionist, Jewish graduate student in 1971 to study the 1930s movement of Palestinians and Jews to establish a bi-national, democratic state. I returned there over a decade later with my young family after completing doctoral studies in the United States. Thus, though I had a strong interest in developing the democratic nature of Israel-Palestine, the geographer's concise statement 'primed' me by framing so concisely the non-humanist foundations of the Zionist Project. Problematizing the fate of 'democratic' meant that seeking to achieve the fundamental humanist-driven democratic principle that Israel *become* a 'state of all its citizens' would involve transgressive actions. Hence, upon reflection, this statement was judged to be a violation of a fundamental humanist principle and this in turn became a focus for resistance, for example, to later legislative action that forbids political parties from stating this fundamental democratic principle in the party platform.

Reflection on this stark *border framing* influenced my understanding that these were the fundamental assumptions of nearly all of the Israelis I met in everyday interactions. More concretely, this statement encapsulated the truths inculcated into students participating in my courses – both Jews and Palestinians, though each held diametrically opposing views of their veracity. While I could have ignored this highly politicized situation, I acted in a transgressive manner when I declared in the first session of every university course: "As in mathematical or biological discussions, inquiry conducted in an academic institution should be conducted free of national, religious, or any super-imposed borders." In doing so, I sought to create a *hyphenated* classroom, in-between ethnic or religious borders, in which Jews and Palestinians were invited to experience crossing their communities' own boundaries when engaged in intellectual discourse. Pursuing this approach led some Jewish-Israeli colleagues and students to refer to me, cynically, as the "Palestinian lecturer."

## 2. Having a Safe Haven

*In 1993, a Palestinian sociologist and I discussed transitions in our lives as engaged academics and reflected on our life-histories as we drove to meetings in Jerusalem. Coincidentally, each of us had been living for extended periods in another country - me an American living in Israel, he a Palestinian living in Canada. At one point he observed that "it must have been hard for you to adjust". To which I replied, spontaneously: "That is the last thing I want to do".*

*Documentary:* My statement is the ultimate rejection of the Zionist Project [i. e., to establish a Jewish state in Israel] assumed to be embraced and embodied by all who live in Israel [Jews and Palestinians]: Namely, to normalize Jewish life – as a state and as a culture. For the newcomer, usually the Jewish immigrant, this involves all manner of *closed* socialization; from macro-nationalized tasks (e. g., learning Hebrew, completing compulsory military service) to micro-infusing every cell of one's Being-Zionist (e. g., songs on the radio, children's names).

*Transgression:* This exchange is paradigmatic of the knowledge-power nature of nano discourse. Though never self-identified as a Zionist, on reflection I understood that in this statement I was speaking 'truth to power'. Furthermore, in defining myself as Being-as-Other, I declared here that I live a *hyphenated* existence in-between the Jewish and Palestinian societies.

The importance of this statement for me then, and now, is as a declaration straight from the *transgressive posture*. I was also acknowledging an awareness of my need for omnipresent vigilance and continuous praxis – including the need to act at any given moment to counteract, oppose, and transgress forms of Zionist culture, including the nuclei of Being, albeit unwilling, but still party to a colonialist enterprise. In terms of the ontological nature of transgression and understanding the reflective potential of power-knowledge, this spontaneous statement was the act that placed me in the hypen-zone. However, as praxis, this was a 'minor' act of transgression emitted in a safe, non-conflict situation; that is, with a like-minded Palestinian. Another insight gained from this *nano* exemplar is that safe havens are needed by activists in the process of

developing a transgressive posture, as occurs when participating in vigils, demonstrations, and transgressive group actions.

### 3. Resistance

*In 1990, a few Israeli and Palestinian educational activists received a Ford Foundation-grant to conduct a project enabling senior educators involved in Jewish and Palestine reconciliation - co-existence projects to reflect on our efforts with colleagues from other intractable conflicts. As Project Coordinator I was able to secure sponsorship and housing of the project in the Haifa University Jewish-Arab Center. A new Center Director had been appointed in the interim between submission and receiving the grant; a [different] Jewish geographer in place of a Palestinian professor of literature.*

*When we met to discuss this project, the new Director questioned our use of 'Palestinian' to refer to Israel's Arab citizens [PL then about 18% of the population within the pre-1967 borders]. We explained that research studies- including those conducted by historians and sociologists who are members of the Center's Board - verify that this self-referential form of identification is both widespread and historical. The Director rejected this argument and issued the following ultimatum: "**Since they are Arabs, not Palestinians, you must change the wording or lose the project.**" Supported by the Ford Foundation, we refused to comply and moved the project to the International Center for Peace in the Middle East.*

*Documentary:* This incident references Israel's now historic strategy to refuse any manner of reference to Palestinians in public discourse. The most famous 'document' supporting this claim is the statement by Prime Minister Golda Meir in an interview with *The Sunday Times* on June 15, 1969: "There is no such thing as a Palestinian people... It is not as if we came and threw them out and took their country. They didn't exist." Obviously, accepting this term, from the Zionist perspective, would legitimize Palestinian claims of historic residency and ethnicity. Instead, the two terms "allowed" in state documents and public discourse, until today, are references to Arab Israelis [note the Center's name] or identification by religion – Moslem, Christian,



Druze, Circassian. The irony of the second set of references is that the Zionist Project repudiated non-Jewish societies and states' historic references to Jews living among them in Europe or the Americas as a religious group. Furthermore, this incident is exemplary of the depth of penetration of the Zionist ideology and collaboration of academics in reproducing this ideology; hence, proving the claim of the totalizing infusion of the Zionist enterprise, even in a research center dedicated to studying and discussing both Jewish and Arab/Palestinian societies.

*Transgression:* This incident contributes three aspects to our understanding of an evolving *transgressive posture*. First, this exchange might be viewed, arguably, as a form of jousting or even taunting, as happens in academic debate. While, admittedly, this is often enjoyable and serves to hone arguments in academia and in public discourse, in terms of transgression, such jousting serves as a form of "testing the waters [borders]" – of self and others – to gain a sense of what is possible, or how far one can go.

Second, the boundary set by the Director was too serious a matter to be allowed to remain solely in the domain of discourse. From our point of view, active *resistance* and transgression of the Zionist view was necessary, since accepting the ultimatum would violate two principles: [a] the right of any people to use its own terms of reference; [b] one of the primary aims of this project was to investigate the need for asymmetrical or "uni-national" work, as a remedy to refusal by Israeli educational authorities to allow Palestinians to study their own history and culture in formal educational institutions.

Third, resistance and taking a stand meant living in unforeseen ways with the consequences of the act of transgression. While this may be unforeseen given the spontaneous nature of nano discourse, there are always multiple consequences of such acts. The positive consequences were solidarity among project leaders and participants, finding a new home for the project, and advancing the work of the project, too, as acts of resistance and educational activism.

#### 4. Playing for High Stakes

*In 1994, the International Center for Peace in the Middle East [ICPME] Board of Directors recommended my appointment as Executive Director, charged with the task of leading their efforts*

*to support implementation of the 1993 Oslo Peace Agreement. Though ICPME was the civil society action arm of the full spectrum of social democratic parties in Israel, final confirmation required receiving approval of the organization's unofficial leader, a high ranking Labor Party member and former Minister of Justice in the early 1970s. Our meeting took place in his well-appointed offices in Tel Aviv. Asked about my current activities, I described my organizing discussion sessions for the country's first conference on torture, sponsored by various organizations of Jewish and Palestinian mental health workers, doctors, and educators. The ICPME titular leader stated briskly: "**Torture? What torture?**" To which I explained that for me that question was answered in 1971 when "**I walked behind the police station near the Russian Compound late at night.**" "**I see,**" he said, interrupting me in an abrupt manner: "**I think that will be all. We'll be in touch.**" I did not receive the appointment as Executive Director.*

*Documentary:* Situated next to the beautiful Russian Orthodox church, outside the walls of the Old City, in the newer, western side of Jerusalem, the police station was built by British in the 1920s during the Mandate period. The activities undertaken by the security forces in the police station were an open secret at the time, audible to anyone walking behind the Russian Compound along Zamora Street in the middle of the night. The implications of admitting such policies are obvious and demonstrate Jewish-Israelis' acquiescence with policies of denial of anything that imputes what multiple governments have defined to be their highest mission - willingness to commit any and all actions to secure the Jewish state (e. g., manufacture and possession of nuclear armaments, attacks on civilian populations in Occupied Palestine, recent arrests of Palestinian-Israeli human rights workers).

Furthermore, this nano exemplar is an interesting documentary referent because it exposes [a] Labor Party culpability for policies that many persons outside of Israel consider to be inhuman; [b] the borders and manner with which Israel interprets its commitments to international agreements; and [c] so-called Jewish 'left' parties are first and foremost Zionist, and then, perhaps, committed to humanist-democratic principles.

*Transgression:* This incident exemplifies four key points regarding the inquiry undertaken here: First, as I recall, this incident meets the *spontaneous* criterion of nano discourse, as it was neither planned nor a consciously intentional act of transgression. Second, this is by all accounts a transgressive act, at least in the view of the public represented by the media and politicians who accused organizers of the conference of being state traitors. Third, this is a mature example of the transgression posture guiding activist praxis, as it evolved through processes exemplified in previous accounts. Fourth, less positive consequences occurred in this case, as I was denied the position which at the time had the potential for involvement in significant processes that we know in hindsight, ultimately failed.

## Discussion

This essay explored aspects of the posture through which transgressive actions are undertaken, in this case via analyses of *nano discourse* - a rich resource with potential for insights into micro knowledge-power relations that have not been the focus of social inquiry for quite some time (e. g., Garfinkel, 1967). The overarching goal, in doing so, was to contribute to development of a grounded theory of transgression. Beyond this investigation, future studies of the ontological nature of transgression might investigate the claims made in this essay by probing other aspects of experiencing Being-a- transgressor and experiencing transgression beyond the four examined here - framing, safe havens, resistance, and playing for high stakes.

Another rich area for further investigation and conceptualization is Being in-between, in the *hyphen* zone, from which transgressive actions take place. Entering this zone might be conceived of as the experience portrayed by Kierkegaard as a "leap of faith". If so, we might ask, proverbially: OK, once one has made the leap - in our case, crossing borders of social norms, breaking laws, and so forth, what is it like to experience doing so and to act from beyond the previous border? Are new understandings and views developed there in the zone in-between social borders, as well as, looking back, a-cross the border, into one's former world? Or, perhaps performing transgression is not such a dramatic, one-time move? Rather, the border proves to be more porous and fluid than once imagined, and multiple *crossings* are undertaken. If so, what is the

nature of these experiences? If these latter versions occur, then transgression is a very dynamic process, and, as the transgressive posture matures, as transgressors move back and forth and gain experience, what new understandings of life within and beyond former borders develop?

For example, from an ontological perspective, we could investigate the nature of Being in the *hyphen* zone as an experience and way of Being different from, though necessarily related to, one's former 'home'. One may speculate that reflection and viewing social life from this new perspective provides us with new avenues for exploration and discovery; poses challenges, for example, in terms of identity development; requires resourcefulness and fortitude in dealing with oppositional critique and judgment from home – and quite possibly by fellow transgressors co-inhabiting this new territory; and, in doing so, leads us to seek sources that provide us with validation and support.

Investigating Being from this rich, new perspective, with these dynamics, should lead us to understand relations between Being in this domain and resources drawn upon beyond our geo-political and/or social domains that inspire, enrich, and drive transgressive praxis; such as, the Declaration of Human Rights, work of human rights organizations, and the International Court of Justice – in the case of transgressive, democratic activists in Israel. In other words, Being in the *hyphen* zone may well involve relations with other spheres of influence and resources involved in transgressive social change efforts.

In terms of praxeology, investigating praxis from this enriched, dynamic view of the *hyphen* zone may enable us to understand the creative and productive nature of transgressive actions. More specifically, investigating actions undertaken by transgressors Being in-between may help us understand the creative potential and productive nature of hybridity as processes that involve creation of new material and conceptual entities that both draw upon but are more than the sum of the stimuli from one's 'home' and the Others' zone, as well as, from sources beyond ones geo-political and social domains. Thus, investigating the transgressive posture and Being in-between borders is essential for understanding how social change develops as a global entity, as we see in relations in contemporary popular social movements from the Tea Party Movement and the

Arab Spring to global Occupy Wall Street Movement – at the time of this writing - and beyond?

Continuing this dynamic, multi-dimensional view of transgression, we can argue that while the experience of transgression is an individual action, as in the existential leap of faith, it is in returning to Heidegger's concept of *Mitsein* also an action undertaken with others who are there physically or supporting you beyond your context, from a far, even globally, via mediated forms of virtual and social media, as well as, contributions of ideas and funds. If so, we should also be investigating the role of global social interaction in the dynamics of experiencing transgression.

Aside from investigating these domains and questions, I hope this essay has demonstrated that advancing development of a grounded theory of transgression requires investigations of a rich, varied corpus of transgressive acts and experiences. Such a corpus includes transgressive acts performed in the *macro*-public sphere; such as, dramatic acts of resistance that attract media attention, revealing state secrets as undertaken by WikiLeaks, or – in the case of contemporary Israel – violating legislation passed in July 2011 that supporters of the BDS Movement [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions] be held culpable for financial damages suffered by Israel-associated entities, such as Settler enterprises in Occupied Palestine. More directly related to the analysis presented here, I submit that transgression performed in *micro*-social encounters is extremely relevant in developing a ground theory of transgression; such as acts performed in transgressing religious, gender-sexual, and general social norms.

Finally, let me acknowledge that approaching conceptualization of the *transgressive posture* through autobiographical analysis required that I address nano incidents from several decades ago. Certainly events in Israel-Palestine have shifted dramatically from this period when we felt that democratic forces might still have an impact against the overtly colonialist Zionist enterprise. Historically, other scholars have produced insightful analyses of Israel during this period and since from a humanist perspective (e. g., Kimmerling, 2001; Pappé, 2010). However, as I began initially in this essay, my experiences in Israel-Palestine as well as the empirical exemplars of nano discourse were selected to be illustrative of the totalizing forces that infuse micro-aspects of social life, as well as, sites where the transgressive posture matures and is acted upon in everyday

social life. Such situations are not limited to Israel-Palestine, as there are multiple contemporary situations, globally, in which humanists and those seeking to advance democratic cultures and systems feel compelled to resist anti-democratic forces; such as actions taken by super-nationalist, anti-GLBT, or global capitalist forces opposing realization of equality among all citizens and residents of countries, as we see in the Occupy Wall Street movement spreading across the world. Similarly, democratic initiatives by activists in China and the 2011 democratic movements in Arab countries are rich resources for investigating the evolution and maturing of transgression and the transgressive posture. Conducting investigations of these and many other such phenomena have the potential to contribute not only to developing a grounded theory of transgression, but, more broadly, are essential if we are to understand the nature of activism and social change.

### Acknowledgments

I want to thank the reviewers, Carolyn Byerly, Dafna Lemish, Leeshai Lemish, and Robbie Lieberman for their support and insightful comments in reading earlier versions of this manuscript.

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## The Rise of the Underground

### Moroccan Music festivals between Laughter, Drunkenness, and Excre-Mentality

*Moulay Driss El Maarouf* born in 1981, got his MA in Cultural Studies at the Moroccan Cultural Studies Centre, Fez, studying gender construction in advertising photography. Currently he is doing a PhD on the local and global dynamics of Moroccan music festivals at the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies, Germany. He also has a penchant for fiction and poetry.

This paper treats the concept of laughter and humor in relation to music and music festivals in Morocco, against the dominant bleak background practices of violence, social injustice, poverty, and political corruption. I deal with the festival as a site of theatricality and terrain for the production of laughter, while putting emphasis on the rituals of defiance, anger, cynicism, madness which, by giving birth to complex artistic gags, help explore humor as transgression. Music festivals are seats for the materialization of the politics of excrementality which is developed to describe a type of mentality inspired by images and metaphors of excrementation, disgust, and the violence they presuppose, to create a new platform for dirty-mindedness not as mere vulgarity but as resistance. The festival spurs a carnivalesque atmosphere of celebration involving music and an audience, breaking down the separation between performers and spectators. In such an atmosphere, music pilots drunkenness and drunkenness stirs laughter. Such laughter is complex because, while drunkenness can generate it, it can otherwise be fully cognizant. Should laughter be sparkled by wine, it should also be sparkled by calculation and intent and a seriously somber desire to translate these into laughter, a mixture of sound and grimaces, that makes it all the more drunk. To laugh soberly is to cushion thinking within amusement, to paraphrase an emo-



tion into coded body reactions, aware the worlds of laughter are replete with their own words. The aspect of drunkenness stays, if we consider that excess in laughter produces drunk-like moods. In the midst of this ambiguity, where causes for and reasons behind laughter are lost and definitions of the funny are unattainable, laughter, aided by the general festival disguise, becomes treacherously precarious. When the festival sinks in laughter, we should stop till we have known the reason. In the least, in a festival, laughter is the people's way of triumphing over their terrors (Hollis, 2001).

### **Are you Laughing at me? No, just the Other that is you**

Laughter can be disturbing. In the festival the *I less powerful* could laugh at anything and everything, especially those in power, laughter being perfectly achievable within the atmosphere it creates and creates it. The laughter of the oppressed is produced on the margins of social insecurity and political autocracy. Laughter carries great weight when it comes from the oppressed who, when he laughs, the autocrat knows that it is out of place, produced neither by joy, nor by prosperity. Although the festival can be a good nest for laughter, laughter should still be out of place, because it is not genuinely generated against a pleasurable social reality. When the autocrat fails to find a reasonable laughing matter within the whole orchestration of things, he thinks that if there is laughter where laughter should be scarce, there can be almost only one subject that should be ridiculous for the oppressed and who is likely to reap that much appreciation from the mass, and this subject is himself. The festival weaves out a situation whereby the oppressor cannot jail the oppressed for having exploited the claims of amity and warmth he advances through the festival to make him subject to derision. As a fieldworker, my objective is to unravel the meanings and effects of laughter in urban music and music festivals, together with the large spectrum of power relations the geo-limited terrain of the festival involves between the *I more powerful* and the millions of *Is less powerful* that block the peripheries of social, economic and political life.

The prestigious halo of the modern music festival in Morocco, where millions of dollars are invested, reflects the image of those who make a payment to sell this image to the exterior world. For

Mbembe the search for majesty and prestige in the postcolony contains within it “elements of crudeness and the bizarre that the official order tries hard to hide, but that ordinary people bring to its attention.” (Mbembe, 2001, p.109) While for Mbembe the people do it ‘unwittingly’ in the context of presidential procession, in the festival it does not come by accident. Since agency is calculated the agent laughs because the circulating joke is a reference to a number of observable quotes brought together deliberately to convey a particular opinion. While the festival prestige is meant to offer the festival as a ‘ritual of confirmation’ to use Mbembe’s words, the body in dance- what Mbembe calls ‘assembles en masse’- breaks the silence by inciting the body to break into laughter in the face of the evident lies of the official discourse and the confidence of elites. (Mbembe, 2001, p128-129).

The ‘festival subject’ is not terrified by the prestige, the prestigious, and those who secure stately power and decorations, because their presence at the heart of prestige teases all sorts of statuses. The more powerful brings the mass (mob-ass) or what Bakhtin calls the substratum into the court of power and authority and asks it to behave. If the mass (m-ass) behaves it should produce gestures twice as offensive and improper, especially it is inebriated by laughter and other intoxicating boosters. The festival brings the socially excluded to entertain a ritual of confirmation and reaffirmation of the status of the subject and that of the master, to comfort the status quo, to maintain master-slave, down-top roles and to show loyalty. Laughter therefore designs a battleground for confrontation between two antagonistic discourses. Humour is used in the festival to discuss sombre issues replete with sorry and distrust. It prompts the autocrat to wonder nervously: ‘Are you laughing at me?’, while the response ‘no, just the other’ is a delicate way of asking the question: which other? Once thought to be the other, the other can now reverse the game and declare the self (always associated with those in power) other. However, since the space of the festival, fraught by laughter, music, dance and colours, is almost extraordinary and fantastic, and because it is extraordinary and fantastic there is so no way to edit out the subject from the epistemological complexity of the festival text.

## **Festival Doppelganger: The Interface between Laughter and Violence**

A Humor is the Biasse of the Mind  
By which, with violence, 'tis one way inclin'd!

Music and music festivals witnessed radical changes in their core reason of being, marking a shift from innocent celebrations of beauty, love and the arts to celebrations in the times of demise of innocence and the contamination of beauty, love and the arts by the political and the ideological. The death of the festival as beauty followed the failure of organic society, where the concepts of the harvest, the crops, the moussem, blind marriage feasts, the halqa, country dweller, merchant, festivities for blind marriages have been tainted by discursive power, control, antagonism, cynicism and distrust. In fanatical reaction to unsettling local traumas (terror), political disturbances (the bloody quest for democracy in the Arab world in general and the North Africa in particular) and social anomalies superseded by petrifying episodes of social authoritarianism and the widening of underclass anxiety, music and music festivals have given way to profane and violent modes of comic jesting.

*Dundes in Cracking Jokes*, (1987, p. vii) departs from the assumption that nothing happens in a vacuum, asserting that 'no piece of folklore continues to be transmitted unless it means something—even if neither the speaker nor the audience can articulate what that meaning might be.' Humor as protest in the festival cameral comes heterogeneously pregnant with symbolic and literal violence. Either through theatrical gestures and through music or any other comic manners, the incarnation of violence characterizes the birth of laughter from within a violent language of language (musical text for instance), the body (attires or posture), the social milieu (urban structures, graffiti, urban incongruities between places and concepts). Protest itself signals an amount of counter-violence mounted against existing modes of violence. Protests, either led peacefully through art or violently through blood, capture the violent mindset of the protestor whose gesture hints at a burning desire for change and the sense of struggle that goes with it. Humor's peculiarity lies in its elastic polarity: it can operate for or against, deny or affirm, oppress or liberate. On the one hand, it reinforces pejorative images; on the other, it facilitates the inversion of such

stereotypes. Just as it has been utilized as a weapon of insult and persecution, so, too, has humor been implemented as a device of subversion and protest. (Boskin, 1997, p 38)

Boskin calls our attention to the elasticity of humor. I should only add to that chaos in postcolonial Africa is a wonderful scenery against which laughter instills order. Protest through humor as a quest for restoration is after all a vent for the oppressed to alleviate the sad brutalities of subjugation and inferiority. 'Music and humor provided a more universal outlet for the black', Schechter remind us, 'through the medium of what may be considered "protest" hymns in today's vernacular--spirituals with courageous double-entendre lyrics that provided a small measure of comic relief from the cruelty and hardships of slavery (Schechter, 1970, p. 26).' Indeed, postcolonial laughter (a mixture of order and chaos, sense of humor and sense and sadness, violence and pacification, mischief and good will) brings to the fore the existence of some duality. Such duality arrests an unmanageable set of doubles symptomized by the undying lines, however fuzzy and trespassable, between the margin and the center, the oppressed and the oppressor, the mass and the m-ass, theatricality and reality, humor and sufferance, evil and good.

Plate one, taken from the Boulevard festival in 2010, is a typical example of the *Doppelgänger*, whose acts represent the subject,



according to Andrew J. Webber (1996, 1) as more or less pathologically divided between reality and fantasy. This paper cannot aspire to present an all-inclusive theoretical or analytical account on the *Doppelgänger* and *Doppelgänger* acts in the festival, but it will provide a glimpse into some examples of 'chronischer Dualismus' (chronic dualism) in the music festival, without, of course, dissociating all this from our discussion on humor and laughter.<sup>2</sup>

Plate 1

Andrew J. Webber outlines his definition of the Doppelgänger in a series of premises.<sup>3</sup>A major premise has it that Doppelgänger acts center around what J.Webber calls ‘double visions’, which are concerned around the visuality of the Doppelgänger and also his capacity of self-seeing, being a subject who ‘beholds its other self as another, as visual object, or alternatively is beheld as object by its other self.’ This duality, according to J. Webber, or visual ‘double-bind’ affords the model for the broad conflict-ridden objectification of the subject in the example of the Doppelgänger. The festival Doppelgänger (plate 1) is a master of theatrical visuality. The colors he uses put him into the center as an outstanding lookable element, strange and familiar. He is strange because he comes into an eye-catching visuality that triggers in the observer a sense of curiosity that the unusual character of the Doppelgänger puts forward. He is familiar because while he stresses the estrangement factor, he activates a sense of familiarity by enacting the character of the Joker, whose face thrives in polysemy. This leads us to Webber’s one more premise of doubletalk. Doubletalk goes analogously with double vision, and it is condition marked by an instance of recurring chaos at the level of speech. Far from merely creating a visual scandal, the Doppelgänger functions doubly on language.

The language of duality spoken in plates one and two summarizes the characteristic of doubletalk. The two photos portraiture the flowing of a double dialogue system. On the one hand, the Joker wears two faces, and, on top of them, two statements (sadness and imposed joy). Laughter is drawn on his sad face in the same red color with which a tear is dotted under his right eye. On the other hand, the plate two shows a scene where death is doubly mocked. First the woman draws her fingers into a gun, but tries at the same time to turn her facial language into evidence for the seriousness of death. She is proposing a funny parody where death is a woman who displays a “be scared or else I will kill you, and if you don’t believe me see how grim and fierce I’m” face. The to-be-killed guy, tongue protruding, is subject



Plate 2

to the finger-shaped gun yet he wears a 'yes kill me, please, while I'm making the peace greeting' mockingly laughing posture. The I'm-sad-but-smiling and a fake-gun-will-kill-me-and-I'm-smiling engage theatrically in a double but chaotic act of Doppelgänger speech. Theatricality addresses the third premise, performance.

Doppelgänger performances lie at the heart of festival. For Webber, the Doppelgänger is 'an inveterate performer of identity', where the subject puts on shows his 'performative character.' In the act of performance, notifies Webber, 'selfhood a metaphysical given is abandoned here to a process of enactments of identity', so much so that the performances by the Doppelgänger will look like try-outs or 'rehearsals' of a twofold role, which reminds us of role of Lacanian mirror. Similarly, the festival subject who performs a sense of humor against a grim reality narrates, within the histrionics of doubleness, identity as he feels it torn between a two-faced selfhoods.

### **The Politics of Transferability in the Festival: Time, Body, and the Urban Space**

Festival mass turns festal terrains into spaces for primordial practices. First, it does something to subjects as we have seen that makes them dividable. It also downloads programs of interaction and being that adhere to the logic of laughter and drunkenness, which, in turn, render both time and body transferable. I use the term festival transferability to make up for a complex network of connections and practices that render situatedness, essence, hierarchies and meaning impossible to grasp. In festival celebrations time pours backward from future to present and from present to past (Firmat, 1986, p. 9). This is an instance of transferability that is charged by uploads and downloads of different shapes of time that all together, in the end, form a situation of present pastness or modern primordiality. That is to say, festival drunkenness, intermingled with laughter and its excesses, take the festival and its guests into a dimension between reality and non-reality, between the modern and the primordial, whereby civilization momentarily gets freed of its civility, its subjects unbound to any ties of civilization. The body goes forward to the future while getting transferred momentarily into a pastness where the belly and the lower parts become the center of the body, which, delivered constantly in laughter and trance, loses all connection with modernity.

Therefore in the context of festive performance, liminality, as understood by Victor Turner, can be thought of in terms of festival transferability because the pre-event (preliminal) transfers us to the event (festival as liminal stage), which transfers us to the forming of union or the m-ass (mob ass) within the festival where action starts to take place. Festival transferability permits to understand how bodies transferably transform from one shape to another (from ordinary look to disguise back to ordinary look), or how times transfers as we have into liminal time marked by its own chronological sense, or how hierarchies and power within the festivals shift in speedy and dramatic ways to give shape to the festival monster, uncharacterized by demarcation or compartmentalization, suffused by the quest for wholeness, which upsets the initial boundaries set by the festival organizers to discipline the mass, which, in its evolvment into a m-ass which is bawdy, laughing and drunk, resists containment and classification.

The concept of humor and festivity we are addressing in this writing is central to the acceptance of the phenomenon of reversal (which we can otherwise call transferability, doubleness, and dualism, etc) because the latters spring from within the strictures deposited by a whole (in)distinct forms of culture-bound symbolism and specificities and obligations of the historical timeliness where they open up, conditioning the repertoire of the texts we have studies so far. These inform us about their relation to and impact on festive behavior. The following lyrical content show how urban music best describes the state of reversal in music festivals. In his 'The Police', Bigg the Don uses a number of techniques in his song (ridicule, irony, satire, etc) to strip the police of their charisma, and to break the limits of fear that dissuade ordinary citizens from expressing their abjuration of some police practices.

### **The Police<sup>4</sup>**

The Police, police, police, police  
The Police...  
Have gone nuts, stopping who they want  
Stopping who they want  
Shamelessly, shamelessly  
The police can talk to your pockets and lie with  
power

'You went through the green light in speed, 70  
Kilometres per hour!'

'But if you give us 50 (Dirhams)'

'That should be fine' (x4)

'Beyond this option, there's no way, you must pay  
a fine'

'Either be with us or against us!'

If the police stops you keep head down

If you are not faulty, attack with a frown

If you are riding a 103 motor bike then wear a  
*casque*<sup>5</sup>

Give the police the chance to wear no mask

Don't violate the laws, for a safer stand

Are you sick or round the bend?

The police serve they with a money wand

(Chorus)

If a tiny car you have, they'll cause you lots of  
trouble

And if a big car they will salute you with no rub-  
ble

Or if the car is charismatic, with code A-1 <sup>6</sup>

Then you really need the protection of no one

And if your car looks like trash so crashed

They will stop you 't n' say the lamps are scratched

Or be like 'why are the lights off in the day?'

Or 'why did you go through the green light in  
the night?'

Or that 'you look more like a thief, not at all like a  
good civilian!'

Wonna win the respect of the police?

Go and buy a Mercedes

Or go buy a ticket in the *tobis*<sup>7</sup>

(outro)

There's the white in the police

There's the black in the police

The black in the police has ruined our lives

Oh Morocco treat your police well, so that they  
treat us well!



This is the plan! Oh you policemen when I see  
you...  
I hope when this track comes out you won't be  
stoppin' me at every junction...  
No evil is meant black and white, peace be upon  
you...

Bigg has performed this song during the Mawazine festival, and was the audience's double on stage. Through reversal of role, the artist manages to contain the forces of the system (the police) and corner them into a sentiment of perplexity and impotence. Bigg brings street politics on stage, and demonstrates through funny examples how the police engage in practices of corruption and oppression. He throws the police behind the bars of suspicion, and declares them culpable and responsible of many street sins. This is a situation where the artist on stage weaves a discourse of criticism crisscrossed by the appreciation and co-singing of the audience. Bigg tries to project an instance of street injustice and inequality, where the Moroccan with a 103 motor bike is a sub-citizen in the opinion of the police, who many times is treated with impunity and humiliation. This song is a veritable example of the modes of doubleness, festive transferability and reversal that disrupt the laws of power in society, and that allocate voice to the Moroccan nigger. Bigg pokes fun at the police and provokes laughter in the festival, a rare situation where criticism against those in power can be effected successfully through art with no repercussions possible. Bigg further provokes the police during the outroduction, leaving the song while expressing his hope that the police won't hold this song too much against him, and take revenge in the street. By saying this, he further confirms his argument that the police are above the law, and their decisions are often based on unlawful pronouncements. In brief, what the phenomenon of reversal should teach is that festive practices upset structures of continuity and linearity and therefore declare the collapse of fixed meanings, of unbending expectations, declaring rapture and change of paramount importance to the rites of reversal, that to humor there is pain, to reality there is theatricality, to politeness there is vulgarity, and to uncontaminated mentality there is excrementality.

In the main Vulgarity is a question of intention and opportunity; One can be vulgar when one's intentions to be vulgar meet an op-

portunity. Vulgarly in the music festival takes place in the music and the festival. The festival, awash with its own musical vulgarity and profane performance, makes a reference to, and is in itself a reference to the mood of the era where it is produced. It holds a mirror out to the badness of the epoch, to the crookedness of social lines, to the absurdity of life, to unscrupulousness of the worth of human relations and emotions. In our post-colonial world, art has been ushered, or probably itself ushered itself, by obligation not by choice, into a world of the words and images of unprecedented vulgarity.

Robert Pattison asks the question that if we are torn between the sureness that the 'vulgar will join civilization' and the likelihood that 'civilization cannot survive vulgarity', then are we not to lapse into the fate Rome, at a time where the 'young rebels' attitude being 'For God's sake, burn it down! (Pattison, 1987, p.v) The victory of vulgarity, Pattison contends, withholds no promises of the annihilation of 'elite culture' but the 'reinterpretation' of that culture in a popular style (Pattison, 1987, p.vi). The visions of vulgarity are pre-apocalyptic, and not at all apocalyptic, yet they contain a sense of bitterness, a mood clouded by what is coming, that what is coming is worse than what is being lived. George Bataille, in his *Death and Sensuality*, while speaking of the ogressness of/in feasting, whereby 'we can always imagine a heavy vulgarity taking the place of frenzy' without possessing the ability to disallow the chance of a 'state of exaltation' made of the intoxication that goes with the orgy, the erotic and ecstatic (Bataille, 1962, p.112). As I see it, a sense of decay drifts in the spectacle as an arena of feasting, creating a state of cohesively vulgar imagination that can't escape the attractions of its own social afflictions, or the underpinnings of its own creative makings. A vulgar imagination is one which produces and consumes, speaks and listens, performs and applauds, sings and dances; it recognizes the vulgar and has intentions to sustain it. It is not synonymous with dirty-mindedness, this being the consumption of the vulgar for vulgarity's sake. It is synonymous with excrementality, a mentality which, in its ideological framing, creates and innovates, inspired by excrement, its functionality and symbolism. While the dirty-minded has a dirty mouth, bawdy thoughts, and lewd gestures, he is incapable of being otherwise. The excremental, on the other hand, enjoys a mentality for profanity, without such a mentality leading to any case of behavioural standardization

or sameness, like being vulgar all the time, regardless of alertness to intention and opportunity, context and selectivity. While dirty-mindedness is libidinal (controlled and minded and performed by the body), excrementality is triggered first by a mental code, then second performed by the body. Far from being solely product of physicality, excrementality is physical language contaminated and motivated by intention and purpose, and not the opposite.

In other words, it should be conceded that while excremental must not be disparaged in overly romantic provisos, as pigeonholed by the excesses of the body, we should agree, and at least recognize the presence of brain power. The social condemnations of the excremental as obscene should be at any case be taken with a pinch of salt, for as Justice John Marshall Harlan's reknown line that 'one man's vulgarity is another's lyric,' indicates the clumsiness and absurdity of managing a sober criticism of vulgarity could maintain a sharp and trenchant sense of objectiveness and preciseness. Vulgarity in music festivals, especially that sprawling from musics is a product more of the cognitive, less of the emotive, though both of them make the language of the excremental. In brief, vulgarity is meant to disrupt that which is sacred. Especially in a the festival context, marked by *resistance*, it is taken for granted at some point that vulgarity is rudimentarily indispensable to the proposed message, and for latter to have the desired impact, excrementality has to be deliberate, the excremental agent premeditating its consequences, regulating its repercussions. Presumably, an extreme fit of excrementality is as sacrosanct as its underlying objectives (change, expression, criticism, revolution, revenge, etc). Most of the time they perform the very *khsoriya* (vulgarity) expected of them, by performing that through art, as in the case of Bigg *lkhasar* ( Bigg the vulgar, this being the original name for Big the Donn), who cannot be polite, because to do that is to lose his aura.

The orations of politeness can not only be found in the general behaviour of an audience during the spectacle, but is firmly established in the rituals of singing in Moroccan culture as a form of dependability on and praise of the status quo. In rap music, commercial rappers, those who seek money and fame and the blessing of the system, eulogize the order of things, singing forever, in some form of neo-patriotism, about the "white" side of the country, and they call it *lface zwin* (the nice side). This would demand the gra-

cious congratulation of the accomplishments of the governments, state politics, ignore state violence, corruption of local agencies, foregrounding a discourse of persuasion as to the efficiency of the mainstream order. Underground rappers find commercial rap contemptuous, and could even call commercial rappers infidels, shoe lickers, because they overlook 'l'face lkhayab' (the bad side), delving into the excesses of lucrative optimism and hypocrisy in exchange for material rewards. The orations of vulgarity are employed to reveal certain truths about corruption, dishonesty, wretchedness as they are seen and discussed by these young Moroccans, standing out not merely as artistic categories of production, liable to passive models of consumption, but linked to cultural, social and political forces.

### **Transgression between Power and the Illusion of Power, between the Individual and the M-ass**

In 2010 I interviewed popular Moroccan singer Said Mouskir, among other artists. Mouskir complained quite respectfully, when I asked him about his opinion of rappers in Morocco.

Many radios are now open for us, but these should be controlled. Not everything goes! Radio opens a door unto houses, with respectful families. I wouldn't want my mother or sister or son listen to some of what rappers say. Some hip hop songs are good, with beautiful messages! I respect them, so does the great audience they have.

The call for respect and politeness, however, do not blend with the mentality of vulgarity and change. I could discuss this idea of change with anthropologist and DJ Joseph in May, 2010, at the ALC (American Languages Center) where he teaches. Because he mentioned at a previous meeting he studies music and change, I asked him about the kind of change music would promise.

'First personal change.' He replied. 'If you look at ghettos in Brazil, ghettos in South Africa, ghettos in America, music offers people an escape. Music offers people a way to leave the pain of their reality, and to express themselves a lot of times in a happy way. It gives them joy. It gives them meaning. It gives them purpose. And most people

in life are looking for that. `Josef stop for a second and go on, `if you look at hip hop in Palestine right now. People are surrounded by a wall. They cannot move. They cannot leave, but music breaks the wall. Music gives them the chance `to fly` -here he uses his fingers to draw quotes in the air- as clichéd as it is , but music gives them freedom.

Music, according to Joseph, leads to freedom, or the illusion of freedom. I think it is necessary, when dealing with Africa, to speak about freedom and the illusion of freedom, democracy and the illusion of democracy, order and the illusion of order, love and the illusion of love, peace and the illusion of peace. These are concepts that come with their shadows. It is interesting to ponder how the illusion of freedom could substitute freedom and act like its model.

Joseph mentions how music breaks the wall, how repressed people transcend their reality

(the wall) through music to attain freedom. However, reality has it that the wall is always there. In the Moroccan context, Big the Donn together with all the subculture artists I interviewed reflect a grim and miserable underground reality, this being music that hinges on social realism to break the wall, which in its basic functions restrains the freedom of both individuals and groups. All of them use language to refer to the problem, which should otherwise stay unspoken. The problem (the wall, poverty, corruption, and the like) stays. However, these musicians find the platforms available (festivals) to speak and be heard. Festival promulgates, driven by artistic imagination of both artists and organizers, into positioning transgression in a liminal space between power and the illusion of power, between singular demonstration and collective demonstration, between the festival and the street, between resistance and trance, or what I call resistance. The term resistance hinges on contradictory states, reality and reverie, violence and peace, puppeteered transgression and expression, dispatch and receipt, power and vulnerability, soberness and drunkenness, rage and elation, integration and alienation, tension and relief, control and stupor. Re-

sistance and trance, once mingling, piloted by rhythm and dance, take in for questioning these many incongruous gestures and mindsets.

Resistance, however, is neither exterior nor interior. It is resistance supervised from above, and regulated from below. That's to say, it is a constructed resistance, in the sense that the terrains of sublime transformation in youth settings from meek to wild are part of a theatrical set up that materializes when it materializes through preparation, approved applications and plans, funding, organization in brief. For Andrew Smith in festive terrains 'transgression takes place not in some random anarchic splurge, but within and around particular, recognized and recognizable forms that constrain but also enable'. We end up having an exterior epitome of authority (ministry of culture), notably assisted by different-size wallets (partners or sponsors) constructing a frame for what will grow into a theatre of resistance, aided by exterior boosters, a mob, drugs, and music. Such are what Andrew Smith calls 'the paradoxes of transgression, conceived as a violation of norms and normative conduct, which in turn constitute (but not "follow") new norms of human expression—recognizable forms by a community in transgression<sup>8</sup>.

### Notes

- 1 Shadwell, Thomas. "Preface to *The Humorists, A Comedy*," in *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Spingarn, 2:162.
- 2 As cited in *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature* (Webber, 1996, 1).
- 3 These premises are borrowed from his book *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature* p 3-4-5 , 1996.
- 4 I have translated the song from Moroccan Arabic into English
- 5 103 is a very tiny motor bike, that looks more like a bike. Motors riders need to put on a casque (helmet) to avoid police harassment.
- 6 A1 cars are vehicles matriculated in the capital, Rabat. Bigg is trying to refer to street power relations and the politics of reversed fear, when many times the car has signs that refer to the power or status of he who owns it, and as such is enough to discourage a police man from stopping it.

- 7 Autabus in Moroccan Arabic. *Tobis* is borrowed from French and appropriated in daily speech.
- 8 I would like to thank Prof. Andrew Smith for his pertinent comments and deep and insightful contribution to the current discussion on festivals and transgression.

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## Demokrati som transgression

### Civilsamfundsalternativer i indvandringspolitik

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### Indledning

Den globalisering, der er kendetegnende for nutidens sociale og politiske processer, udvikler sig i paradoksale retninger. På den ene side udbredes en konsensus om, at kapitalismen er det eneste system, og andre ideologier (især den socialdemokratiske) skal forny sig, 'moderniseres' og tilpasses de nye tider. Frem for at blive mærket som upassende eller blive tildelt ansvaret for den nuværende finanskriser, er kapitalismen faktisk blevet styrket, og det neo-liberale hegemoni ser ud til at bestå. Både fra venstreorienterede partier, som fx engelske Labour, og fra højreorienterede partier, som Union pour un Mouvement Populaire, tales der om en mere men-

neskelig kapitalisme, uden at dette medfører en egentlig kritik af selve systemet<sup>1</sup>. På den anden side dukker nye sociale bevægelser op over hele verden, og de kæmper for en anden verden. Den såkaldte antiglobaliseringsbevægelse dækkede en forskelligartet vifte af krav, fra skat på transnationale finansielle transaktioner (som ATTAC) til promovningen af økologisk landbrug (som f.eks. Via Campesina).

Vi ser denne antagonisme som en kamp mellem en tendens til at fastsætte en diskursiv lukning, som bevarer dominans, og et forsøg på åbning og ændring af den sociale orden. Nærmere bestemt argumenterer vi, at lukningen bliver udfordret af transgressive praksisser, dvs. praksisser som inkluderer dem, som tidligere var ekskluderede, eller giver stemme til dem, som ikke havde nogen stemme, og udvider den politiske sfære, der før var begrænset til bestemte aktører. Vi baserer vores argumentation på Jacques Rancières teori og hans bidrag til transgressionsanalyse fra en politisk vinkel. Vi finder hans ide om, at demokrati kun realiseres, når de, som ikke har del i den offentlige sfære, bliver inkluderet, helt central. Transgression overskrider de eksisterende grænser og giver mulighed for at inkludere andre stemmer (nye subjektiviteter i konflikt med den dominerende orden).

Vores mål er at vise, hvordan civilsamfundsorganisationer agerer mod den gældende konsensus omkring indvandringspolitik i Danmark gennem transgressive praksisser, som afslører den sociale ordens kontingens og anvender lighedsprincippet til at inkludere nye subjektiviteter i den offentlige sfære. Først definerer vi en række nøglebegreber (den nye politiske subjektivitet, den diskursive lukning som konsensus, dikotomien mellem politi / politik og den demokratiske bevægelse som transgression). Dernæst ser vi på situationen i Danmark: Vi begynder med en gennemgang af de seneste indvandringspolitikker, som er blevet accepteret af de fleste partier og møder generel støtte i den offentlige mening. Den neo-liberale orden er ikke kun en global økonomisk strategi, der bygger på at skærpe konkurrence, begrænse offentlige udgifter, at skabe fleksible markeder og generelt deregulere statens indflydelse. Den bygger på et underliggende politisk rationale, at hvor individet selv bærer ansvaret for egen succes og omvendt selv må tage konsekvenserne af stå i en marginaliseret socioøkonomisk position (Rose, 1999). Dominansen af denne rationalitet har lukket de politiske og

diskursive mulighedsstrukturer og skabt en konsensus med et iboende fravær af forandingspotentialer. Denne ramme fastsætter i høj grad den orden, hvor det bestemmes, hvem der er en del af fællesskabet, og hvem der ikke deltager i det. Som modstykke til denne diskursive lukning beskriver vi kort to sociale bevægelser, som søger at fremme demokrati (dvs. politik) og omdefinere det fælles. De to cases fungerer som illustrationer af vores teoretiske argument.

### **Transgression: den politiske dimension**

I de seneste år er det blevet tydeligt, at der er nye sociale bevægelser, som agerer i en ny politisk kontekst (nemlig globaliseringen), og som er svære at klassificere, især hvis man tager de klassiske teorier om sociale bevægelser som udgangspunkt. Vi vil fokusere på denne fremkomst af heterogene politiske aktører, som er modstandsdygtige nok til at fungere som repræsentanter for eksisterende organisationer (som fagforeninger eller økologister), anvender nye teknologier kreativt og hviler på en spontan og decentraliseret organisatorisk struktur. Michael Hardt og Antonio Negri (2003) har brugt begrebet *multitude* til at beskrive disse nye bevægelser i modsætning til Imperiet, som er en form for biodominans, der går tværs igennem alle sfærer (økonomiske, sociale, kulturelle). Ifølge Hardt og Negri (2009) består denne klasse af fattige, indvandrere og andre udsatte, der plejer at blive betragtet som ekskluderede. På trods af at de oplever dominans, evner de at producere sprog, bevægelser og alternative levemåder, selvom dette ofte overses. De nye bevægelser er kendetegnet ved pluralisme og diversitet og består derfor af nye former for interessefællesskaber og alliancer. Ifølge Hardt og Negri er det netop heterogeniteten, der giver muligheden for reel demokratisk potentialer. Det betyder, at vi ser meget forskelligartede grupper gå sammen og anvende meget forskelligartede strategier i forsøget på transgression af lukkede mulighedsstrukturer. Aktivismen bliver en respons til en politisk og social konsensus, der legitimerer udemokratiske praksisser og ulighed.

I takt med den voksende kompleksitet i det moderne samfund er eksklusion nemlig en kernesag for de forskellige sociale grupper. Forfattere som Chantal Mouffe (1993; 2000) har henledt opmærksomheden på, at en diskursiv lukning indebærer en form for eksklusion. Det betyder, at man skal betvivle konsensus, da den reelt er en mekanisme til at deaktivere den sociale antagonisme, som eksisterer

i alle sociale forhold. Pluralisme skal derfor fastholdes og ændres til respekt for forskelligheder. Mouffe betegner dette som forandringen fra antagonisme til agonisme. Med andre ord er antagonisme en måde at undgå den diskursive lukning, idet denne har en tendens til at reproducere magt- og dominansforhold. Et alternativ opstår, når der artikuleres diskurser, som formår at udfordre den hegemoniske orden og afspejle den mængde af sociale identiteter og kampe, som kendetegner antagonismen.

I denne forbindelse finder vi Jacques Rancières teoretiske tilgang relevant. Til forskel fra Hardt og Negri er der hos Rancière (2006a) ikke en modsætning mellem forskelligartethed og demokrati. Den franske filosof tager *demos* som udgangspunkt i stedet for at sætte demokrati op imod konsensus. Demos-begrebet antager en oprindelig lighed, mens konsensus medfører et privilegium for dem, som har adgang til den offentlige sfære og følgelig kan bestemme for andre. Vi opfatter her den diskursive lukning som en måde at sikre konsensus (og eksklusion), og de demokratiske bevægelser som en måde at udfordre lukningen og åbne den offentlige sfære til andre aktører. Præcist denne måde at overskride den diskursive lukning på kalder vi transgression.

Rancière (2002) taler om opdelingen af det sensible ('le partage du sensible') for at forklare, hvordan det fælles (det sociale system) er opdelt, dvs. hvordan dele og steder, som betinger sociale relationer, fastsættes og fordeles. Denne opdeling afspejler den æstetiske dimension af politik, da de eksisterende sociale former påvirker, hvad mennesker vil opleve, og viser, hvem der kan deltage og inkluderes på et bestemt sted og på et bestemt tidspunkt. Rancière anvender begrebet politi<sup>2</sup> (*police*) til at referere til den implicite lov, som definerer delen og den manglende del af de dele, som udgør samfundet. Det forklarer, at der er nogle aktører, som er synlige, og at der er nogle stemmer, som har ret til at tale og blive hørt. Men der er altid mulighed for åbning, nemlig politik (*politics*). Dette begreb er reserveret til at udtrykke bruddet på udformningen af det sensible. Bruddet finder sted, når en del af dem, som ingen del havde, dukker op, og hele opdelingen (dele og manglende dele) skal omdefineres. Politik afslører, at den sociale orden er kontingent, og at der er en lighed mellem dem, der taler (hvilket afvises af politi i den offentlige sfære)<sup>3</sup>.

Politik producerer nye subjektivitetsformer. Når den sociale repræsentation (opdeling af det sensible) omdefinieres, opstår der en mangfoldighed, som ikke eksisterede før i politiets orden. Ligheden (dvs. princippet om, at vi alle har ret til at tale) sætter spørgsmålstegn ved, hvilke grupper der konstituerer et fællesskab. De, som var ekskluderede (som det skete for proletariatet, kvinderne og oprindelige folk, og som det sker nu for indvandrere), kræver deres dele og politisk eller kulturel anerkendelse. Dette er muligt på grund af modsætningen mellem politi (den ekskluderende orden) og politik (den oprindelige lighed). Universalisme viser sig at være ekskluderende, når nye politiske subjektiviteter afslører, at universalisme ikke dækker alle mennesker lige (fx lige løn mellem kønnene, retten til egen kultur eller retten til at bevæge sig over grænser). En ny slags universalisme bliver instituerende, dvs. den polemiske universalisme (Rancière 1996) eller den konkrete universalisme (Hardt og Negri 2003), hvori de, som ikke har del, forbinder universalisme (lighed) med konflikt (mellem dem, som har en del, og dem, som ikke har).

Bruddet eller afbrydelsen, som Rancière også definerer det er det, som vi her identificerer som transgression. Ifølge Jenks (2003) er transgression det at overskride grænser fastsat af regler, lovgivning eller konventioner. Vi definerer transgression som en indtrængen af dem, som ikke har del (og hidtil har været ekskluderede), i den sociale orden og de deraf følgende omstruktureringer. Når italienske aktivister kalder sig 'de usynlige', irregulære indvandrere 'de papirløse', unge spaniere 'de indignerede', så handler det om, at de alle kræver deres del (dvs. det, de ikke tidligere har haft) og retten til at tale og blive inkluderet. Disse nye subjektiviteter overskrider den diskursive lukning, som afholdte dem fra at kunne deltage i det offentlige rum. De transgressive praksisser kan nedbryde en 'le partage du sensible', da nogle aspekter bliver synlige, og andre forsvinder som en konsekvens af ændringen i den symbolske orden.

Sociale bevægelser afspejler konflikten mellem politi og politik og udfordrer dermed konsensus. Disse grupper fremhæver en uenighed, som ikke kun handler om holdninger, interesser eller værdier, men en strid om selve den offentlige sfære. Ulighed (politi) konfronteres med lighed (politik). Homoseksualitet kan ikke opfattes som de individuelle seksuelle praksisser, ligesom vold mod

kvinder ikke kan defineres som noget, der sker inden for hjemmets fire vægge. Homoseksuelle og feministiske bevægelser har været i stand til at omdefinere grænserne mellem det offentlige og det private, og det har medført, at disse sager nu betragtes som sociale og ikke blot som individuelle. Rancière hævder, at politik som strids-spørgsmål er det samme som demokrati. Det betyder, at demokrati medfører dannelsen af nye subjektiviteter, som før var ekskluderede. Demokrati er i denne forstand transgression:

Den demokratiske bevægelse er faktisk en dobbelt transgressionsbevægelse over grænserne, rettet mod områder af det almindelige liv og konkret mod alle dem, som styrer den ubegrænsede kapitalistiske rigdom og også en bevægelse rettet mod at bekræfte tilhørsforholdet til denne offentlige sfære, der er uendeligt privatiseret, for alle og hvem som helst. (Rancière, 2006b: 84).

Alt i alt indebærer transgression en udvidelse af den offentlige sfære, hvor forholdet mellem privat og offentligt (hvem har ret til at tale og deltage) og mellem universalisme og partikularisme (hvad er lighed, og hvordan inkluderes mangfoldighed) omdefineres. Fra et politisk synspunkt må man derfor analysere de transgressive praksisser, som overskrider de politiske grænser (og deres opdeling af det sensible, som reproducerer dominans) og muliggør inklusionen af nye politiske subjektiviteter. Helt konkret vil vi her se på, hvordan to organisationer udfordrer den politiske konsensus omkring indvandringspolitikken i Danmark og dermed fremmer social forandring.

### **Den diskursive lukning: policy-udviklingen om indvandring**

Udviklingen i den danske indvandringspolitik minder om en række andre vesteuropæiske landes. Under højkonjunkturen i 1960erne oplevede landet en stigende arbejdsmigration, som resulterede i at et begrænset men stadig signifikant antal af udlændinge kom til landet. Ingen forventede, at arbejdsmigranterne ville blive i landet, ej heller dem selv. Oliekrisen skabte økonomisk recession og førte til det totale indvandringsstop for arbejdsmigration i 1973. Men mod forventning tog de herboende udlændinge ikke hjem men valgte at

blive og få deres familier til landet. Sidenhen kom der større flygtningegrupper til landet, ikke mindst som konsekvens af den meget liberale udlændingelov fra 1983, der indførte de facto beskyttelsesbegrebet, der rummer bredere beskyttelse end FN-konventionen fra 1951. Ikke desto mindre skete der meget få politiske tiltag inden for integrationsområdet, og politikken var primært kendetegnet ved ad hoc løsninger. En stigende utilfredshed med mangel på koordineret indsats fra specielt de københavnske omegnskommuner med socialdemokratiske borgmestre leder til de første reelle politiske tiltag til at udvikle en integrationspolitik. I 1998 bliver den første danske integrationslovgivning præsenteret af den socialdemokratiske ledende regering og indført fra 1. januar 1999. Den er baseret på en forestilling om deltagelse og socialt medborgerskab men indfører også en strammere kurs mod integration og italesætter integration ud fra et økonomisk paradigme med mindre vægt på de sociale aspekter. Denne forståelse sætter fokus på individet og dets eget ansvar og ser mindre på de strukturelle problemer og barrierer for integration. Det er samtidig en forståelse, der deles af de borgerlige- (K og V) og indvandrerkritiske partier (Z og DF), og der skabes en diskursiv lukning i den forståelse af 'problemet'. I 2001 overtager V og K regeringsmagten støttet af DF og introducerer allerede i 2001 en række nye indvandringspolitiske tiltag. Danmark får verdens første integrationsministerium, og der vedtages en lang række af stramninger de kommende år, som dels begrænser adgangen til landet og dels sætter flere krav til den enkelte af de indvandrere og efterkommere, der allerede er i landet. Lettere forsimplet kan man sige, at den danske politik baserer sig på fem rationaler:

- 1 vi må gøre noget ved de problemer, der allerede er, før vi kan tage nye indvandrere og flygtninge ind.
- 2 integration er først og fremmest arbejdsmarkedsintegration og økonomisk selvforståelse (Regeringen, 2005).
- 3 'Noget for noget' – den ekstra indsats skal belønnes, og omvendt skal mangel på indsats føre til sanktioner. Dette bygger på et neo-liberalt økonomisk menneskesyn (Regeringen, 2004; 2010a).
- 4 Kerneværdier skal respekteres og promoveres. Dette ses fx med introduktion af integrationstests, indfødsretsprøve mm. Også regeringens seneste Ghetto-udspil kan ses i forlængelse heraf (Regeringen, 2010b).

- 5 Universelle rettigheder bliver i stigende grad problematiseret, og der indføres gradvist flere og flere tiltag, som skaber et stratificeret system af personer med fulde rettigheder og personer med begrænsede rettigheder (fx starthjælp, 225 timers reglen, pensionsydelse til flygtninge, retten til permanent opholdstilladelse, adgang til familiesammenføring mm.).

Eksempelvis hedder det i Udlændingeaftalen mellem regeringen og Dansk Folkeparti fra 2010, som sætter nye krav ifb. med opnåelse for permanent opholdstilladelse, at: "Omvendt bliver det sværere for dårligt integrerede indvandrere at få permanent opholdstilladelse i Danmark, fordi betingelserne samlet set er strammet op. Nogle indvandrere vil formentlig aldrig kunne få permanent opholdstilladelse i Danmark" (Regeringen, 2010a), og i Folketingets åbningstale udtaler statsminister Lars Løkke Rasmussen at: "Lad os tale åbent om det: I områder, hvor danske værdier ikke har fuldt grundfæste, vil almindelige løsninger være helt utilstrækkelige" (Lars Løkke Rasmussen, Folketingets Åbningstale 5. oktober 2010). Dette udmøntes senere politisk i Ghetto-planen (Regeringen, 2010b).

Indvandringspolitiske spørgsmål er som i mange andre lande stærkt politiserede, men i Danmark er de i sjælden grad i stand til at mobilisere vælgerne og dermed afgøre valg (Goul Andersen, 2006). Det finder den politiske opposition også ud af og op gennem 2000erne, bliver det stadig mere svært at se forskel på den såkaldte 'røde blok' og regeringspartierne – der opstår politisk konsensus (som styrker *police* ifølge Rancière) i såvel det politiske system som i den brede del af befolkningen, og de politiske mulighedsstrukturer lukkes gradvist. Det politiske rum er ekskluderende over for afvigere og minoriteter, og restriktioner legitimeres ud fra en forståelse af, hvem der er værdige modtagere af offentlige ydelser, og hvem der ikke er. Eksempler er undersøgelser vedtaget gennem finansloven, som skal belyse, hvad tredje- og fjerdegenerationsindvandrere 'koster' samfundet. At have en anden etnisk baggrund bliver et stigma i sig selv og virker som ekskluderingsmekanisme fra fællesskabet. Netop gennem den diskursive lukning bliver det svært for etablerede politiske aktører at udfordre den hegemoniske orden, og den politiske opposition ønsker reelt ikke forandring men bakker op om den vedtagne kurs, som gennem årtiet bringer flere og flere restriktioner. Mest markant er måske afviklingen af etablerede politiske og



civile rettigheder som fx retten til permanent ophold eller mulighederne for familiesammenføring, som skaber 'ontologisk usikkerhed' og politisk umyndiggørelse. Samtidig erstattes det humanitære udgangspunkt, som eksempelvis lagde grunden for Udlændingeloven i 1983 af en neo-liberal økonomisk rationalitet i kombination med en kulturalistisk politisk diskurs, der som beskrevet virker ekskluderende, skaber politisk desillusion og har udemokratiske effekter (som også teoretiseret af Schneider & Ingram, 1997). En tendens på sidste er fx afkortede høringsfrister i forbindelse med nye lovtiltag, som efterlader meget lidt tid til at forberede reelle svar, flere og flere tiltag implementeres administrativt og går dermed uden for den politiske proces, og flere og flere afgørelser lægges ned på embedsmandsniveau som eksempelvis afgørelser og vurderinger af tilhørsforhold mellem partnere, der ønsker familiesammenføring. Det skaber afmagt, mangel på transparens og i sidste ende potentielt inerti (Jørgensen, 2011a).

Hvis ovenstående analyse godtages, står samfundet altså med nogle alvorlige demokratiske udfordringer. Diskursiv lukning og konsensus som følge af en global økonomisk logik og nationale særinteresser har lukket det politiske rum for social forandring. Ikke desto mindre finder der transgressioner af den politiske dimension sted, og nye interessefællesskaber i civilsamfundet forsøger at formulere demokratiske alternativer og udfordre den hegemoniske sociale orden og fremhæver samtidig nye former af social antagonisme. I de følgende afsnit vil vi kort beskrive to sådanne bevægelser.

### **Kirkeasyl**

Kirkeasyl er et netværk, som opstod i forbindelse med en planlagt udvisning af 282 afviste irakiske asylansøgere. Da irakerne, assisteret og koordineret af Kirkeasyl, tog ophold i en kirke i 2009, var den asylpolitiske debat relativt uændret siden 2001-2002. Det politiske flertal, som sad ved magten, var det samme, som tidligere havde afskaffet de facto flygtningebegrebet og indført et individuelt flygtningebegreb. Kirkeasyls krav om, at de afviste irakiske asylansøgere skulle have opholdstilladelse, blev således resolut afvist af politikere fra både regering og størstedelen af oppositionen. Dette illustrerer igen den diskursive lukning og herskende konsensus.

Den meget resolute afvisning af at ville hjælpe de irakiske asylsøgere, på trods af at Danmark havde været en del af kollations-

styrkerne og invasionen af Irak, stødte mange civile danskere og skabte en latent platform for politisk mobilisering, som Kirkeasyl kunne udnytte i forsøget på at ændre den sociale orden og skabe en ny politisk subjektivitet (for mere om selve aktionen se Jørgensen 2011b samt andre bidrag i antologien). Politik (*politics*) dukker op som et behov for mobiliseringen uden for de etablerede politiske kanaler, da meget få politikere ønskede at ændre ved beslutningen, men samtidig rummede den på baggrund af den relativt store folkelige opbakning nogle potentialer for at rykke ved den asylpolitiske diskurs og genindføre en forståelse af asylpolitikken, som byggede på et humanistisk grundlag. Bevægelsen baserer sig altså på en transgression af det politiske rum, forstået som opdelingen af det sensible, og inklusion for dem, som ikke tidligere blev betragtet som en del af det. Der har ganske sikkert været mange danskere, som ønskede at ytre deres kritik af systemet og gøre en aktiv indsats for at forbedre forholdene for de irakiske flygtninge uden at have den fornødne vilje eller gejst til at melde sig ind i politiske partier og samtidig skulle forholde sig til andre politiske emner, og hvad der kunne opfattes som politisk 'træghed' og 'handlingslammethed'. Kirkeasyl udgjorde en politisk platform, der fokuserede på enkelte emner, og den løse struktur gjorde det muligt at lægge det engagement i netværket, som man magtede, komme hurtigt til handling og endeligt var den relativt omkostningsfri at gå ind i.

Kirkeasyl kan ses som både en respons på en lukning for indflydelse og forandring i de etablerede politiske kanaler og som et udtryk for en nyere type af demokratiske platforme, der mobiliserer bredt men også mere løst, og som er blevet en del af det organisatoriske landskab. Netværk eller platforme som Kirkeasyl er appellerende for en gruppe af mennesker, der rækker ud over aktivister på venstrefløj og danner et nyt interessefællesskab for meget forskellige aktører. En dyb utilfredshed og frustration over, hvad der opfattes som fremmedfjendskhed og selve den hegemoniske asylpolitiske diskurs, har virket mobiliserende på både studerende og pensionister – generelt folk, der har følt, de havde resurser at byde ind med, om det så var tid, penge, eller fx juridiske og sundhedsfaglige kompetencer. En nøgle til at forstå Kirkeasyls tiltrækningskraft har været det ikke-voldelige udgangspunkt for civil ulydighed. Støtter og deltagere i netværket har vidst, at de til tider har stået i en gråzone mellem lovlige og ulovlige aktiviteter, men på

intet tidspunkt har der været støtte til militante eller voldelige formål, på trods af at netværket også havde medlemmer med fortid og nutid i det autonome miljø. Som netværk har Kirkeasyl været dygtige til at understrege denne pointe, og selv under selve rydningen fik Kirkeasyl hurtigt rundsendt sms'er, der opfordrede til ikke at gå i 'kamp' mod politiet. Forståelsen af civil ulydighed, som deltagerne i Kirkeasyl tillægger aktionerne, ønsker ikke at gøre op med retsstaten som sådan men trækker på en diskurs, som siger, at det kan være i orden at bryde loven for at skabe retfærdighed. Transgression viser sig som en effektiv måde at overskride grænsen mellem det lovlige og ulovlige og skabe demokrati og inkludere de ekskluderede. Denne forståelse virkede tilsyneladende stærkt appellerende på en bred vifte af folk.

For at opsummere opstår Kirkeasyl altså i et politisk lukket rum, hvor der blandt dele af befolkningen er tiltagende utilfredshed med den førte politik på området. Den meget løse organisationsform, der gør det muligt at byde ind, hvor man kan, og bruge den tid og de resurser, man har til rådighed, i kombination med at fokusere på en enkelt klart formuleret sag, som viser sig i stand til at påvirke den politiske dagsorden, danner derfor en ny demokratisk platform og modstandsform, som, i den tid netværket var aktivt, virkede meget effektivt og professionelt. Fælles for denne type af netværk er, at de som regel har en relativt kort levetid og risikerer at forsvinde, når den oprindelige entusiasme og engagement har lagt sig. Her adskiller sådanne netværk sig fra de tungere mere traditionelle politiske organisationer, som ofte rummer nogle incitament for politisk karriere og lignende og derfor er mere konsoliderede og holdbare over tid men som til gengæld har svært ved at mobilisere medlemmer. Eksempelvis havde SF og Radikale begge lidt under 10.000 medlemmer i 2006 og Dansk Folkeparti 8.600. Kirkeasyl skønnes at have fået op mod 20.000 mennesker på gaden for en kort periode. Trods den relative folkelige opbakning ændrede aktionen hverken asylpolitikken eller beslutningen om udsendelse af irakerne. Politiet rømmede kirken den 13. august, og siden blev størstedelen af irakerne udvist til Irak. Det skabte politisk debat og var i sig selv med til at åbne den sociale orden og formulere alternativer.

Et år efter politiets aktion har mindst 20 af irakerne, der sad i kirken, fået lovligt ophold. Sagerne blev genoptaget på baggrund af dokumentation fremskaffet under opholdet i kirken, og disse senere

givne opholdstilladelser kan altså ses i direkte forlængelse af Kirkeasyls aktion. Som Information skrev "synes det tydeligt, at aktivisten virkede, mens systemet fejlede" (Information, 14-15.08.2010). De tyve irakere, som fik ophold, ville højst sandsynligt være blevet sendt til Irak uden at have fået sagerne genoptaget, hvis ikke de havde sat sig op imod myndighederne. De transgressive praksisser formåede at inkludere en ny subjektivitetsform (asylansøgere), som (uretfærdigt) ikke tidligere var en del af den politiske orden. Selv om politikken (*police*) ikke ændrede sig helt, repræsenterede transgressionen en åbning og en mulighed for at forestille sig et mere inkluderende og demokratisk samfund.

### **Asylumhome.net**

Asylumhome.net var ikke en traditionel social bevægelse, men en platform for en politisk og æstetisk kritik af den politiske konsensus.<sup>4</sup> Asylumhome.net var et aktivistisk initiativ, der udsprang fra kunstverdenen og virkede gennem nye sociale medier, hvor flere kunstnere ønskede at reartikulere kunstens kritiske og demokratiske potentiale. Kunst blev her ikke opfattet som et konsumprodukt men som en platform for demokratisk engagement og mulighed for at udfordre konsensus og skabe *politik* i Rancières forståelse. Initiativet har i dag taget en ny form og findes som sådan ikke længere, men det er et godt eksempel på et civilsamfundsalternativ.

Wooloo.org er en transnational virtual platform for kunstnere. Det var herfra, at initiativet til Asylumhome.net opstod og blev styret af Wooloo Productions. Asylumhome.net var et netfora, som havde omkring 200 brugere. Det tilbød "A space for asylum seekers", altså et virtuelt mødested for asylansøgere og politiske flygtninge i Europa. Et fælles sted som deltagerne kunne bruge til at udveksle oplevelser og erfaringer, arrangere events og mødes i den virtuelle verden på tværs af grænser og med en større følelse af sikkerhed. Samtidig tilbød bevægelsen gratis juridisk assistance (baseret på frivillig arbejdskraft) til asylansøgere, der ville klage over afgørelser. Wooloo Productions opfattede flygtninge som ekskluderede fra den sociale orden og søgte med projektet at give dem en ny subjektivitet: "Vi satte os derfor for, i samarbejde med vores samarbejdspartnere, at give unge flygtninge og asylansøgere en stemme i det offentlige rum" (Politiken, 19.06.2006). Netforaet gav afviste asylansøgere mulighed for at styrke deres sag og erfaringsudveksle,

og resultatet var, at en del af afgørelserne rent faktisk blev omstødt (Information, 11.06.2010). Stifteren af projektet udtalte selv, at projektet netop handler om at udfordre den hegemoniske orden, når den legitimerer ulighed, og skabe en platform for repræsentation for de ekskluderede: "Ideén var at give asylansøgerne en chance for at organisere sig og lære deres rettigheder at kende, så de ved det, hvis alt ikke går rigtigt til" (ibid.). Resultaterne viste netop, at i flere tilfælde var afvisningerne forkerte, og ud over de menneskelige konsekvenser for ansøgeren peger det på et demokratisk problem. Gennem alliancen mellem kunstnere, juridisk kompetente frivillige og flygtninge sker der en transgression, som peger mod demokrati og tydeliggør, at politik er arbitrært og baseret på eksklusion.

### **Mod en konklusion**

I artiklen har vi fremført et teoretisk argument, der hævder, at den diskursive lukning af den sociale orden har skabt et rum, hvor nye og forskelligartede interessefællesskaber udfordrer lukningen gennem transgressive praksisser. I forlængelse af teoretikere som Mouffe, Hardt, Negri og navnlig Rancière har vi endvidere hævdet, at transgressionen er en betingelse for demokrati, og at lukkede mulighedstrukturer skaber rum for civilsamfundsalternativer. Vi har brugt den danske indvandringspolitik som et eksempel på en diskursiv lukning og givet to eksempler på, hvordan den hegemoniske sociale orden, der er skabt i Danmark inden for dette politikområde, udfordres gennem forskellige praksisser ved at se nærmere på rationalerne og strategierne anvendt af henholdsvis Kirkeasyl og Asylumhome.net.

Analysen af den danske kontekst og responsen herpå leder til flere konklusioner, som ligger i forlængelse af vores teoretiske afsæt. For det første viste begge eksempler, at den nye form for interessefællesskab virker inkluderende for forskelligartede grupper, der ellers ikke har været i berøring, som fx kunstnere og afviste asylansøgere, og udfaldet af initiativerne, eller transgressionen, har været produktivt for demokratiet, idet begge cases pegede på illegitime politiske afgørelser. Vi argumenterer, at kun når antagonismen i det politiske rum synliggøres og bliver accepteret som en del af de politiske og sociale dynamikker, er det muligt at skabe lighed og inklusion. Den diskursive lukkethed er i den danske kontekst markant. På trods af at Socialdemokraterne og SF står til at vinde det kom-

mende folketingsvalg formulerer de intet alternativ på det indvandrerpoltiske område men støtter til stadighed op om konsensus. Formanden Helle Torning-Schmidt udtalte i november 2010, at der ikke ville ske flere stramninger på udlændingeområdet med deres støtte, men ikke desto mindre stemmer begge partier for en ny udvisningslov i juni 2011, der strider mod internationale konventioner og ubetinget er en stramning af udlændingepolitikken (Information, 22.06.2011). Mangel på opposition kan derfor fastholde en ekskluderende universalisme, hvis den ikke bliver udfordret, og der er brug for de civilsamfundsmæssige alternativer, hvis målet er politik (som oprindelig lighed). For det andet peger transgressionen fra de nye bevægelser på en politisk subjektivitet, der gør op med inert. De nye civilsamfundsbevægelser udtrykker en politisk passion, som de seneste år primært har været definerende for den populistiske højrefløj og indvandrerkritiske partier. Transgressionen har en iboende praksis, der er handlingsorienteret og dermed kan være revitaliserende for demokratiet.

Sociale bevægelser, der advokerer og kæmper for udvidelse af rettigheder, for opretholdelsen af civilsamfundets autonomi, for øget demokratisering og modstand mod nedskæring og afvikling af rettigheder, er nødvendige og vitale for at holde demokratisk kultur i live. Bevægelser og netværk kan bringe nye emner og værdier ind i den offentlige sfære, mobilisere latent støtte og derigennem søge at påvirke politiske forandringer.

## Noter

- 1 Ifølge Ed Miliband (Labour) handler det nye politiske projekt om at finde et alternativ til USAs kapitalisme, dvs. en kapitalisme "that works for people and not the other way around". Nicolas Sarkozy savner mere moral i økonomien men mener, at selve systemet skal forblive det samme: "We are not asking ourselves what we will replace capitalism with, but what kind of capitalism we want?" (BBC, 2010)
- 2 Rancière advarer om, at politi ikke kun skal forstås som statsapparat (og heller ikke snævert som den specifikke organisation eller institution), fordi det også gælder samfundsordenen.
- 3 Denne dikotomiske tankegang kan også genkendes i andre forfattere, som deler lignende visioner om, hvordan social foran-

dring kan finde sted imod de etablerede sociale strukturer og den diskursive lukning. Bl.a. Hardt og Negri (2003) taler om potestas / potentia; John Holloway (2005) om power over / power to do; og Cornelius Castoriadis (1998) om institueret samfund / instituerende samfund. Alle er enige om, at politik ofte reduceres til politiske institutioner, og det besværliggør vores forståelse af, hvordan social forandring kan finde sted, og alternativer kan skabes.

- 4 Det skal nævnes, at det domæne, der i dag ligger under URL [Asylumhome.net](http://Asylumhome.net), intet har at gøre med ovennævnte initiativ.

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## Teaching against the Tide

### Transgressing Norms in the American College Composition Classroom

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After observing a school of fish swim in unison, the difficulty, if not impossibility, of compelling one fish to act individually does not escape notice. Such an endeavor is pointless as fish swim in schools for protection; unity is necessary for their survival. As a result of their collective thinking, schools of fish instinctively know not to swim against the tide, working with their environment rather than against it. College and university composition instructors are expected to act collectively while in their individual classrooms, working to meet the basic course requirements identified by their departments. However, we are still individuals whose pedagogical approaches are influenced by our personal and professional experiences and our scholarly interests. We should be encouraged to challenge our students, not only to think critically and to actively engage with texts, but also to explore readings outside of the literary canon, which is often accused of being comprised of the works of dead Euro-American men. As instructors, we learn to “swim” against the academic tide, challenging ourselves, our students, and our pedagogies by transgressing composition text-selection norms. In this essay, I address some of the texts and topics instructors can integrate into American composition courses to present students with unique points of view. By straying from the canon and assigning a variety of texts, instructors provide students with compelling

and socially relevant material, drawing and holding their attention while probing the boundaries of what is considered the norm. These texts encourage students to question commonly-held ideas on race, culture, religion, politics, sexual preference, nationality, or gender, which in turn leads to essays reflecting their observations, questions, and conclusions.

I have mentioned several “touchy” subjects that many Americans tend to avoid discussing as these topics may lead to disagreements. The possibility of contention is a valid concern—particularly in this age of academic budget constraints and the consumerization of higher education. However, these rather sensitive subjects should not convey the need for additional silences or avoidance in the composition classroom. Instead, delicate subjects should be broached in the classroom as, in all likelihood, they apply to one or more of the students—perhaps even to the instructor. By opening discussions on topics that transgress norms, composition instructors can create a contact zone, a term coined by Pratt (1991, p. 34) and defined as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power”. Two elements of Pratt’s (1991) definition are particularly relevant to my discussion: cultures meeting, clashing, and grappling; and contexts of asymmetrical relations of power. I will refer to both components of Pratt’s (1991) theory as this discussion progresses.

McKenna (1990, p.37) contends that the classroom is a workshop and “a creative space in which students and teachers alike work through their subjectivity to an externalization of the intersecting elements of race, class and gender which define us all”. This involves transforming the classroom into “a politicized space in which the nexus of race, class and gender are questioned and politically activated” (McKenna 1990, p.37). Here, Pratt’s (1991) contention that the contact zone is an area of “highly asymmetrical relations of power” is critical. McKenna (1990) addresses race, class, and gender, which are contextual frames in which power relations can be tested. Power relationships in the U.S. are typically determined along lines of race, class, or gender. Although it would be easy to state that one aspect is more or less likely to determine the allotment of power in American society, it is still difficult to determine which one holds more sway. At any given time, one element can take precedence over the other and power relationships shift in

response. As a creative and exploratory space, the composition classroom can provide students with a forum to examine the causes of power shifts in any society.

Logan (1998, p.55) asserts that composition teachers “need to devise ways to speak the unspeakable”. In the classroom, it is less problematic for an instructor to work with her academic environment, opting out of presenting positions that may lead to dissention. However, Logan (1998, p.54) writes that if composition instructors “desire peace and harmony in the classroom instead of welcoming dissent” they “will be dancing around or smoothing over important issues”. As instructors, we realize that we cannot have it both ways: a participatory classroom and a peaceful classroom. Many of us choose to swim with the academic tide, opting for a peaceful classroom, but many of us transgress the norm, introducing the texts of Other writers, or writers who challenge the canon by questioning commonly-held beliefs about race, gender, culture, sexual orientation, and other topics. Introducing texts that stray from the norm typically raise questions about power and its negotiations. These texts also lead to the inevitable: Self and Other clashing, while trying to determine their relative positions and allotment of power in the classroom and in society. Because of these complex negotiations, an instructor’s decision to swim against the academic tide is critical.

According to statistics compiled by the U.S. Census (2011), the demographics of U.S. tertiary institutions have changed dramatically in the past thirty years. In 1980, the majority of college students were White, with a population of 9,925,000 whereas the Black<sup>1</sup> student population was 1,163,000, and the Hispanic student population was 443,000. By 2008, those populations increased to 14,405,000, 2,481,000, and 2,227,000, respectively. Although White students still lead in enrollment, these statistics indicate that Black and Hispanic enrollment is on the rise. The number of female students went from 5,957,000 in 1980 to 10,321,000 in 2008, almost doubling and with two million more female students than males. In addition, there has been an increase in non-native students from 286,000 in 1980 to 672,000 in 2009 and English as a Second Language (ESL) speakers from 1,111,500 in 1970 to 1,577,800 in 2006. As American colleges and universities become more diverse, courses such as composition should be constantly revised to reflect the ever-changing demographics.

Current student populations suggest that the composition classroom must become a contact zone in which Self and Other engage rather than one in which they wage war for cultural, racial, gender, or any other type of supremacy. This objective can be reached when instructors assign works by Other writers, which are typically excluded from the canon. While striving for the inclusion of the texts of the Other, the composition classroom must also address issues of exclusion. McKenna (1990, p.31) writes, exclusion is “eurocentrism, ethnocentrism, sexism, classism and...racism”, factors that “underlie choices of what to teach and where to teach it; what to publish and what not to anoint as literature”. Twenty years later, McKenna’s (1990) observation is still relevant as identifying those texts “worthy” of being included in the canon is still a point of contention in the academy. The questions still remain: What are the goals of composition? and How can instructors meet these goals while transgressing the course’s norms?

The goal of the composition classroom is to produce not only academic writers but critical thinkers. I identify an academic writer as someone with the ability to produce research-based scholarly texts reflecting an in-depth analysis of any given topic. The term “critical thinker” is multi-definitional, but for the purpose of this essay I define it as someone with the ability to question assumptions and to interpret information. Critical thinkers and academic writers are produced in courses that include texts reflecting broader perspectives and by instructors who allow students to discuss and wrestle with the theories posed in each text. Subjects that were previously avoided or works that were excluded from the canon should be brought into the composition classroom and given as much credence as their canonical predecessors. Inclusionary text-selection practices in the composition classroom provide readers with broader perspectives. In moving toward a more inclusive composition classroom, instructors can select texts penned by international writers. Schaub (2003, p.94) suggests that instructors work to “internationalize our classrooms” which he defines as “providing students, within the mission parameters of a particular writing course, with reading, writing, and research assignments that foster in them a more global vision for their writing and their conception of writing”. Schaub (2003, p.94) also describes internationalizing the classroom as taking the additional step of “rede-

signing...composition courses to make the international focus of assignments an explicit goal”.

The composition classroom must also undergo a transformation in which the Other’s voice is allowed to articulate more than it has in the past. Royster (1996, p.29) writes “that ‘subject’ position really is everything”, meaning that the subject must be given both a safe space and an opportunity to voice her experiences. Royster (1996) contends that although the subject’s voice is often appropriated, the possibility of allowing the Other to articulate her experiences still exists. The Other can describe her experiences through writing, which can then be included in composition courses. The inclusion of the Other writer serves two purposes: it provides students with the subject’s position as articulated by that subject, which is a perspective that students may have limited exposure to in classroom or personal settings; and it allows a true exchange of information between the Self and Other.

At the college where I teach composition, instructors are given the option of choosing from several texts. The texts are diverse, reflecting the instructional styles and perspectives of the faculty, and all faculty members are encouraged to participate in the text-adoption process. As a graduate student, I developed a sample syllabus using an anthology of essays written by well-known authors. When I was offered my first teaching position, the department chair, upon reviewing my sample syllabus, advised me to “stick with what you know”. In keeping with the department chair’s suggestion, I adopted a newer edition of the text for my Composition I course. I found that this text is comprised of excellent essays told from a variety of perspectives and written in language that is neither so simple that it offends students’ intellectually nor so complex that it confuses them. While it is easy to dismiss this text as it is compiled in the U.S. by American educators, the readings provide a good balance between the Self’s and the Other’s perspective.

I have also followed the department chair’s advice by straying from the text and the norm. As I am a postcolonialist and a Caribbeanist specializing in gender studies, female, Afro-Caribbean, womanist, citizen, transnational, and Other, I know from experience that the canon is often exclusive texts by writers who speak to me and of my experiences. To provide some balance, I include additional texts from other sources addressing topics or identify-

ing groups that students may not have encountered. The inclusion of unfamiliar texts, topics, and authors provides the students with a panoramic view of the world, which positively contributes to their ability to produce critical essays.

At this time, I would like to expand Schaub's (2003) definition to include providing students with a panoramic worldview. For instructors, this involves daring to assign non-traditional readings that some students may oppose because the positions expressed in the texts differ considerably from their own. This can be a difficult task as it is easier to slip into familiar pedagogical patterns and habits than to work against those inclinations. Schaub (2003) warns against allowing complacency to creep into our pedagogy, which is a mold that instructors must fight against falling into despite the ease with which we assign the usual, expected texts.

I try to avoid succumbing to complacency by including essays penned by authors expressing opinions that challenge assumptions of power relations. I assign texts by feminist writers who pose questions about gender equality, feminism, and women as Others. These topics are quite applicable in composition courses taught in the U.S. today as there are more women attending tertiary institutions than men. Although it is not difficult to locate essays from the canon penned by White, male, American writers advocating norms, I introduce texts by female essayists that question American norms, which can be harder to find. For many instructors—particularly female instructors—there is a hesitance to introduce “chick” topics. Many of us fear the constant barrage of objections posed by male students about the readings. In addition, we cope with students making assumptions about our text choices based on our appearances. Ardis (1992, p.168) notes, “students often want to position a teacher as a native informant because that's the easiest way for them to account for a teacher's authority vis a vis her subject matter”. For some of my students, I assign female-centered or -authored texts because I am a woman and I am privileging my “kind”. They believe that I am exercising my power in the teacher-student relationship. However, I make no secrets of my motives, which are to expose my students to unfamiliar writers expressing a variety of ideas and to provide a forum in which to actively debate the concepts presented. To meet this challenge with 21<sup>st</sup> century students, it is sometimes necessary to select older texts, such as those by second-wave feminist writers.

One of the greatest problems associated with introducing feminism as a topic of critical examination in the composition classroom is the negative connotations associated with the movement and with women who self-identify as feminists. Discussions of texts centering on feminism can be problematic as this term has become the new “F-word”. Jamila (2002, p.94) writes of feminism, “the dreaded F-word continues to be so weighed down by negative connotations that few people are willing to voluntarily associate with it”. There is nothing more detrimental to a female public figure in the U.S. than for her to claim an affiliation with feminism, especially with the country’s current trend toward conservatism and traditionalism. Forty years after the second-wave feminist movement of the sixties, popular culture is still saturated with images of radical feminists who are cast as bra-burning, convention-shunning, long-haired hippies who unanimously support abortion. This is a rather narrow view of a heterogeneous group, but a topic that must be actively addressed. To question this image, I assign Gloria Steinem’s (1979) “The Good News Is: These Are Not the Best Years of Your Life” in which she discusses feminism and activism on college campuses during the early 1970s. Steinem (1979) believes that although the college campus is viewed as a site of rebellion and free thinking, women’s activism increases, not decreases, with age. The article is written for an audience of traditional, female college students in the U.S., suggesting that if they are members of the Women’s Movement, they will become more radical with age (Steinem, 1979).

I mentioned earlier that U.S. college gender demographics have changed so dramatically in the past thirty years that as of 2008, there were 10.3 million women enrolled in U.S. tertiary institutions compared to 8.3 million men (U.S. Census, 2011). Of this population, 779,000 women were over the age of 35 and considered non-traditional students because they were older, returning, part-time attendees. This group of non-traditional, female students, which may include students with families and full-time employment, has little in common with their traditional counterparts who tend to be younger, first-time college students without families, and employed part time. Therefore, my courses are often populated by an array of female students who do not strictly conform to Steinem’s originally-intended audience profile. Assigning Steinem’s (1979) essay poses other problems not related to gender or my role as a native in-



formant. Because Steinem is no longer as well-known as she once was, she must be introduced to a new audience of readers. Therefore, assigning her essay leads to historical and social examinations of the roles of gender and feminism in current American society in comparison to the American society of Steinem's (1979) essay.

Teaching has expanded my knowledge of student populations and their heterogeneity. As a result, I no longer assume that students are familiar with Steinem, the 1960s, or with second wave feminism and usually begin the discussion with a brief history of all three. Students bring their prior experiences to this discussion, often sharing a considerable amount of misinformation about feminism. However, Steinem's essay is a good selection because it raises questions. Students want to know why the feminist movement was important and if it is still relevant. I can only answer the first of those questions from a historical perspective, and I encourage students to debate the second.

Steinem's (1979) essay provides an excellent introduction to feminism and the feminist movement, but it can be accused of lacking universal appeal. Steinem's (1979) audience is White, middle class, and in college, which is one of the major criticisms of second wave feminism: that it is largely a tool of a privileged, Western few to the exclusion of the Other. As a result, students are exposed to one interpretation of feminism from Steinem that is exclusive of their self-identities. To counter Steinem, I assign texts by third wave feminists offering a different perspective on or a variation of feminism. Sonia Shah's (1995) "Tight Jeans and Chania Chorris" is an excellent counter to Steinem's (1979) brand of feminism because Shah is a third wave feminist, an American born to Indian immigrants, and someone who spent her childhood traveling between the U.S. and India. As the child of physicians Shah is privileged, but she is also Othered as the daughter of immigrants and a woman of color. Shah's parents also maintained close ties to their home country, India, and Indian culture. As a result, Shah has an Indian, international, and American worldview.

Shah's essay addresses the complexities of being a feminist and living between two cultures that are often at odds, which is a situation that many of my students personally experience. Shah (1995) describes the differences between her conceptualization of feminism and her parents', noting that their opposing views often lead

to misunderstandings and heated discussions. These disagreements ended when her younger sister began dressing like the other girls in her class, wearing tight jeans, off-the-shoulder shirts, and too much makeup. From Shah's (1995, p.114) perspective as a feminist, her sister was "exploiting herself and setting herself up for the kinds of exploitation and abuse" Shah suffered at the hands of White, middle class boys years before. Shah (1995, p.117) is shocked by her sister's "taboo display of flesh in full parental view" when her sister returns from a trip to India wearing chania chorris, which "are sets of midriff-baring blouses and long full skirts worn under saris". Shah (1995) is more taken aback by her conservative parents' response. They are pleased with their younger daughter's attire although her back is completely bare except for two small bows holding the blouse closed. Shah (1995) learns that it is not the tight jeans or the short shirts her parents object to, but their younger daughter's complete immersion into American culture at the expense of Indian culture.

After reading the text, the class engages in a conversation about cultural differences and how dissimilarities impact family relationships. Some of my students are immigrants or are the children of immigrants. They find Shah's (1995) essay fascinating because it, in many ways, mirrors their experiences growing up in the U.S. For those students whose families have lived in the U.S. for two or more generations, Shah's (1995) essay is a revelation, detailing the unfamiliar experiences of transnational families and broadening their understanding of the international or transnational Other. Awareness of the non-American Other comes at a price: students stop recognizing the American Others in their midst. At times, the American Other is grouped in with "we Americans" although her experiences may suggest that she is quite different from the traditional American who is White, male, and middle class.

The racial demographics of U.S. colleges have changed in the past thirty years to include higher enrollment of Black and Hispanic students. Despite an increase in students from these two groups, many college students admit that they have read very few texts, if any, by Black or Hispanic writers. This reflects a lack of diversity in the curriculum, which I address by assigning essays by Black and Hispanic authors. One such essay is Maya Angelou's (1997) "Graduation" (Chapter 23), an excerpt from her autobiography *I*

*Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. In the essay, Angelou (1997) describes her experiences as a Black female growing up in the American South during the 1940s. The pivotal event in the text is Angelou's (1997) graduation from junior high school, which is marred by the actions and questionable motives of a local White politician.

Angelou and her entire graduating class are Othered by the comments of a White politician at the graduation ceremony and are told that the local White school will receive new textbooks, but their school will receive new sports equipment. Immediately, the children and their parents are reminded that although academic achievement is a great concern, limits have been set for them and their educational achievements are, essentially, meaningless. Many of my students have some difficulty accepting limits being set for one person by another as they live in a historical period and society in which race provides fewer barriers to success than it once did. I am not suggesting that my students are blind to prejudice, but that they have, or believe they have had, fewer personal experiences with prejudice than someone twenty years their senior.

Essays such as Angelou's (1997) provide introductions to the Other who is American, Black, and female. The historical perspective of the text is often eye-opening for students who may be unfamiliar with the U.S.'s rather complex racial history. From a historical and personal perspective, Angelou's (1997) essay is insightful, giving an account of past events through the eyes of someone who lived them. With the exception of a few students, the responses to Angelou (1997) are typically positive as readers find her style accessible.

The number students enrolled in American colleges and universities, who are not American born, has grown in the past thirty years. This information suggests that the number of ESL students enrolled in composition courses has likely increased. If the course materials can, they should reflect those language differences. As I teach in a state bordering Mexico and many of my students are Spanish-speaking, I include texts utilizing both English and Spanish such as Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) "How to Tame a Wild Tongue". Including Anzaldúa's (1987) essay serves two purposes: it introduces students to Hispanic writers and it places monolingual, American-born students in a position of interpretation.

Anzaldúa's (1987) essay has become a constant and is incorporated into my reading list every semester because I believe that the

inclusion of this particular text is critical given the large number of Spanish-speaking students in American colleges and the current national discourses on language in education. According to the U.S. Census (2011), Spanish-speaking students comprise 823,000 of the 17 million college students in the country as of 2006. In the U.S. states bordering Mexico, there are constant political debates about bilingual education and language rights. Parents, educators, and politicians bandy statements back and forth about which language should have national primacy: native languages or the more common standard American English. Some White, middle class, English-speaking students find these debates irrelevant; they repeat common media and political claims such as the national language of the U.S. is English although this has never been codified. By assigning Anzaldúa's (1987) essay, I place students who are English speakers in the position of interpreting a "foreign" language. I create a situation in which they are "Othered" and in which they must analyze a text, searching for meanings without the advantage of having prior knowledge of the text's language. The responses usually vary; students who speak Spanish are comfortable with the text whereas students who have no prior experiences with Spanish are at a loss. Some students refuse to complete the reading because they cannot understand any of the Spanish terms. It does not occur to them to use one of the free online translators or dictionaries. They, unlike their ESL counterparts, do not learn to navigate the unfamiliar linguistic territory in which they are placed. By the end of our discussion on Anzaldúa's (1987) essay and multilingual environments, many English-speaking students have greater empathy for ESL speakers who must somehow survive in a country and construct a life without fully understanding the language.

I neither claim to know what my students' sexual orientations are nor do I make a point of forcing students to transform the classroom into a confessional. However, I am aware of trends leaning toward conservatism in the U.S. to the exclusion of the Other who is a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) community. I will state that members of the LGBT community probably feel isolated and some heterosexuals may have difficulty accepting sexual orientation differences. As a new instructor, I hesitated to introduce texts by LGBT writers for various reasons, all of which stemmed from my own cowardice; I feared the possible backlash from stu-

dents. However, as I became more comfortable in my role as an instructor, I assigned Andrew Sullivan's (1996) "What is a Homosexual?" In this essay, Sullivan (1996) answers the title question from his position as an Other: someone whose sexual orientation diverges from the heteronormative. Sullivan (1996, p.13) as the subject voice notes, "No homosexual child, surrounded overwhelmingly by heterosexuals, will feel at home in his sexual and emotional world, even in the most tolerant of cultures". The student responses to this statement vary from empathy to disgust as Sullivan (1996, p.13) observes, "every homosexual child will learn the rituals of deceit, impersonation, and appearance". Some students, both male and female, are so outraged by Sullivan and his essay that they refuse to complete the reading. These students choose to accept a zero on a writing assignment because they believe that reading this essay constitutes compromising their principles. The opposite end of the spectrum is comprised of students who support members of the LGBT community because they believe that isolating this group is prejudicial and neo-segregationist. Other students adopt a centrist position in the discussion because they are uncomfortable with homosexuality but are not comfortable excluding a portion of their society's population from the benefits to which they are entitled by default. Forty years after New York's Stonewall riots, twenty years after the institution and repeal of the U.S. military's Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) policy, and the recognition of same-sex marriages in some states, homosexuality is still a topic that generates some negative responses. While I am not suggesting that composition instructors use instructional time for social reform, we should take full advantage of teachable moments when they arise. Therefore, it is critical that we encourage our students to think and to question—particularly about a topic as socio-culturally relevant as this one.

U.S. college and university students are not a monolithic group, and their opinions are as diverse as they are. Because of the variations among the student population, composition instructors must sometimes transgress the norm by selecting texts outside of the canon. When students are presented with intellectually stimulating texts that interrogate their perceptions, they are more likely to actively engage in debates, which benefit the students and the instructor (McKenna, 1990; Pratt, 1991; Wilson Logan, 1998). The concept of allowing students to aggressively debate topics — to challenge

the authors, the reading topics, their own ideas, and society's structures — is crucial if these same students are to positively contribute to the society in which they live. As instructors, we can no longer afford to step delicately around “touchy” subjects by avoiding these topics and the texts that address them at all costs. We cannot always accept the academy's proclivity for selecting instructional materials from the canon and must find ways to incorporate canonical texts and newer, more transgressive texts into our syllabi.

The challenge to university instructors is to combine meeting the composition course's instructional requirements with exposing students to a variety of new and different ways of seeing the world and the varied groups that occupy it. We meet this challenge by sometimes working against our academic environment. “Swimming” against the academic tide can be problematic for instructors. Those of us who choose to transgress the norm may find ourselves labeled radicals and summarily dismissed by our colleagues. This poses a challenge as we try to build our careers and forge professional relationships. However, despite our reservations, we should still strive to encourage our students to explore the many experiences that all texts have to offer.

### Notes

1. I use Black to identify all people of African descent living in the U.S. The use of this term instead of the more popular African American is to acknowledge that many Blacks in the U.S. may identify with another nationality.

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## Forsøgs- og udviklingsarbejde i grundskolen som transgressiv praksis

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### Introduktion

Med tidligere professor i eksperimentalpædagogik Kaj Spelling's (1915-1994) ord er målet med forsøgs- og udviklingsarbejde i grundskolen, at "fremkalde en ændring i det bestående." (Spelling, 1969, p. 167). Med et sådant sigte om grundlæggende at udfordre og overskride en gældende praksis og dens værdier og normer, kan det i en teoretisk forståelse betegnes som en transgressiv praksis (Jenks, 2003). Eksperimenter med pædagogikker, undervisnings- og prøveformer, der har gjort op med bestemte tiders dominerende syn på undervisning, er blevet karakteriseret som udfordrende og oplevet som stærkt provokerende blandt dele af befolkningen og nogle beslutningstagere. Til tider endda i et omfang, der har ført til, at de er blevet stoppet og modarbejdet af myndighederne på forskellig vis. Men samtidig har de også i nogle tilfælde sat processer i gang og er

blevet retningsgivende for udviklingen af nye pædagogiske praksisser, ny kultur.

Men det er væsentligt at være bevidst om, at de kulturelle praksisser er kontekstbundne. De afspejler kulturelle værdier og normer og har en tendens til at reproducere sådanne træk. Prøve- og eksamenssystemerne spiller en vigtig rolle i den forbindelse og bidrager både til at producere og reproducere de kulturelle praksisser (Bourdieu, 2006). Imidlertid kan man tale om kultur, normer og værdier, på mange forskellige niveauer, som hver især er relevante i diskussionen af den transgressive karakter af forsøgs- og udviklingsarbejde: Kultur indenfor landes uddannelsessystemer, på den enkelte skole, i det specifikke lærerkollegium, det enkelte lærerteam, faggrupperes kultur (for eksempel kultur blandt lærere og skolepsykologer), kultur som knyttet til forskellige sociale grupperinger eller lag i samfundet etc. En transgression vil således kunne ses som et udtryk for konfrontationer ikke blot på samfundsniveau, men også på tværs af landegrænser og nationalstater, indenfor rammerne af den enkelte skole mellem forskellige sociale grupperinger og faggrupper.

Kulturelle værdier og normer afspejles i klassifikationssystemer, der sætter sig igennem på mange niveauer, eksempelvis i diskurser og i handlinger (Jenks, 2003, p.34). Sådanne klassifikationssystemer kan opfattes som så fundamentale i forhold til samspillet i samfund og fællesskab, at ethvert anslag mod dem kan opfattes som en provokation. Jenks siger om dette: "To attempt to alter the classificatory system is to strike at the heart of the social" (Jenks 2003: 34). Forsøg på at ændre en etableret samfundsmæssig eller social praksis kan dermed allerede på forhånd opfattes som noget, der vil være forbundet med konflikter og en proces, der nødvendigvis må møde modstand. Men sådanne forsøg på at udfordre grænser kan betragtes som det, der kan føre til nødvendige forandringer, fornyelser og forbedringer (Jenks, 2003). Som kulturelt fænomen vil transgressionen således være afhængig af den kontekst, den udspiller sig i, og af receptionen af den heri (Jenks, 2003, p. 8). Den kan derfor søges legitimeret på forskellig vis ved at påvirke receptionen.

Imidlertid har konteksten for forsøgs- og udviklingsarbejder i folkeskolen gennem årene forandret sig. Den har undergået en proces, der har indebåret en stigende grad af statslig styring. Spørgsmålet vi

stiller er derfor, hvad der karakteriserer sådanne transgressive processer, hvad der sker, når staten træder ind og søger at styre og regulere dem, og hvilken rolle politiske forhold har spillet. Vi vil bruge træk fra udviklingen i forsøgs- og udviklingsarbejdet i grundskolen som referenceramme for at belyse og diskutere dette.

### **Skoleforsøg i mellemkrigstiden – forsøgsklasser i Vanløse og på Frederiksberg**

Nogle af de tidligste egentlige forsøgsarbejder indenfor folkeskolens rammer blev gennemført i tiden efter 1. Verdenskrig. Initiativerne til dette kom ikke fra staten, men fra aktører i folkeskolen. Fælles for forsøgene var generelt en orientering mod en reformpædagogisk tænkning, hvor man søgte et oprør mod og et opbrud med den traditionelle borgerlige undervisningstænkning, med dens stærkt rammesatte pædagogik (Bernstein 1997), - stor distance mellem lærer og elever, faglig opsplnitning, betoning af hierarki, ensartet pensum, klasseundervisning osv. Forsøgene kan i høj grad ses som et anslag mod normer og værdier, der hidtil havde domineret i folkeskolens pædagogik og undervisning. De gav anledning til megen debat og blev blandt visse grupper opfattet som stærkt provokerende og grænseoverskridende (Nørgaard 1977).

Forsøgene var vokset frem af Foreningen for Experimentalpædagogik, der blev stiftet 1914. Foreningens erklærede mål var at fremme psykologisk og pædagogisk viden baseret på pædagogiske eksperimenter i den danske folkeskole. Med denne dagsorden søgte den gennem arrangerede foredrag, artikler og appeller at udøve indflydelse på beslutningstagere i udformningen af den danske folkeskole. Eksempelvis fremsatte medlemmer af foreningen en appel om, at der snarest blev oprettet en forsøgsskole og et pædagogisk laboratorium (Tybjerg 1920). Appellen blev dog ikke hørt, hvilket var symptomatisk. Ganske ofte nåede foreningens budskab nemlig ikke ud i en bredere kreds, og samtidig mødte den ofte betydelig modstand fra lærere og andre skolefolk, som fandt det uansvarligt at bedrive eksperimenter med pædagogik og undervisning<sup>1</sup>.

Imidlertid udgjorde foreningen et vigtigt rum for faglig udveksling og inspiration, og for at etablere en fællesskabsfølelse for mennesker, som kom til at spille afgørende roller for den senere opstart af skoleforsøg i Danmark. Efter 1. Verdenskrig kom dette rum til at

knytte an til den internationalt forankrede reformpædagogiske bevægelse. Den danske reformpædagogiske bevægelse var nemlig kraftigt inspireret af internationale pædagogiske strømninger i 1920'erne (Henriksen & Nørgaard, 1983, p. 15). Med afsæt i disse inspirationer søgte de danske reformpædagoger at påvirke det danske skolevæsen gennem artikler i tidsskrifter, pædagogiske kurser, konferencer og skoleeksperimenter. Et af disse eksperimenter fandt sted i Vanløse i perioden 1924 til 1928. Det var især inspireret af forsøgsklasser i Hamburg, hvis normer og værdier således blev importeret og omplantet i en dansk skolesammenhæng. Forsøgene i Vanløse repræsenterede et stærkt brud med traditionel dansk undervisning og pædagogik, og dermed en transgression, hvor der blandt andet blev gjort brug af individuel undervisning sammenkoblet med testning (Egeberg, 1983, p. 80). Dette skete for at sikre forsøgene med individualiseret undervisning videnskabelig status. Herved søgte man også at legitimere dem i den oftede ophedede debat om folkeskolens fremtidige udformning.

De ti forsøgsklasser blev imidlertid pludseligt og uden varsel lukket i 1928 af Københavns skoledirektorat blot få dage inden den siden 1924 planlagte evalueringsprøve skulle finde sted (Nørgaard, 1977, p. 88). Hovedmanden bag denne beslutning var den konservative uddannelsesborgmester Ernst Kaper (1874-1940) (Henriksen & Nørgaard 1983, p. 13; Nørgaard 1977, p. 88). Kaper var den ledende fortaler for klasseundervisning i Danmark og han så ingen grund til, at en ny og individualiseret undervisning skulle vinde fodfæste i København. Han havde ganske vist støttet eksperimentet i 1924, fordi han så det som en ventil, som skulle lette presset fra reformpædagogerne og deres kritik af det eksisterende skolevæsen (Henriksen & Nørgaard, 1983, p. 25). Men med den omfattende opmærksomhed og udbredte støtte fra forældrene var forsøget efterhånden ved at vokse til, i Kapers øjne, uønskede proportioner.

Begivenhederne fra Vanløse er udtryk for den betydelige uenighed, som karakteriserede dansk pædagogisk tænkning og det danske skolevæsen i mellemkrigstiden og den oplevelse af opgør og provokation, som forsøgsarbejderne var udtryk for. Men ideerne fra disse blev ført videre i andre fora i de følgende år.

I 1931 grundlagde bl.a. reformpædagogen Sofie Rifbjerg (1886-1981) *Foreningen for pædagogisk forsøgsvirksomhed*. Den nye forening

blev grundlagt som et forsøg på at styre fri af det antagonistiske klima i den danske skoleverden. Ved at arbejde med videnskabeligt accepterede metoder håbede man at kunne imødegå skolemyndighedernes og visse læreres kritiske holdning til skoleforsøg. I kølvandet på foreningens dannelse fremsatte de danske reformpædagoger med Vilhelm Rasmussen (1869-1939) og Hartvig Frisch (1893-1950) i spidsen tilmed et forslag om etableringen af en forsøgsskole i København. Forslaget blev godt modtaget af Københavns byråd, der vedtog etableringen af en sådan skole. Kaper ville dog ikke gå med til det og det lykkedes ham at forhindre forslaget realisering ved at argumentere med manglende plads til at føre planen ud i livet (Egeberg, 1931).

På Frederiksberg fandt reformpædagogernes ønsker om skoleeksperimenter imidlertid et anderledes velvilligt klima. Skolevæsenet på Frederiksberg havde længe været gennemsyret af progressive pædagogiske værdier med en bred politisk opbakning (Bro & Mohr, 2008, p. 373). Så tidligt som i 1924 blev de første forsøgsklasser oprettet på *Howitsvejens skole*. Man ønskede på Frederiksberg ikke at stå tilbage for forsøgsklasserne i Vanløse. Der var tilmed et par uofficielle forsøgsklasser på *Lollandsvejens skole*. Men disse klasser blev lukket i 1928, for sidenhen at genopstå på *la Cour Vejens skole*, hvor den pragmatiske reformpædagog Georg Julius Arvin (1880-1962) var skoleinspektør (Egeberg, 1931).

Forsøgsarbejdets skæbne i henholdsvis mellemkrigstidens København og Frederiksberg udtrykker to meget forskellige udviklinger, hvor de lokale skolemyndigheders holdning til skoleforsøg – og dermed transgressive praksisser - i skolevæsenet var en udslagsgivende faktor. I dette kom også politiske magtforhold og værdiers modsætninger til udtryk og transgressionerne kom samtidig til at bidrage til definitionen af 'den normale skole' i modsætning til 'den reformpædagogiske forsøgsskole'.

### **Forsøgsskolen på Emdrupborg**

Der skulle gå 28 år før den gamle opfordring fra Foreningen for Experimentalpædagogik blev hørt og en forsøgsskole blev etableret i København. Men det var ikke staten, der søsatte projektet, men derimod Københavns kommune, der, som nævnt, havde vedtaget etableringen af en forsøgsskole allerede i 1931. Ifølge den nye skoleinspektør, reformpædagogen Anne Marie Nørvig (1893-1959), var

Emdrupborg forsøgsskole faktisk til en vis grad en fortsættelse af 1920'ernes forsøgsklasser i Vanløse<sup>2</sup>. Nørvig havde selv iagttaget forsøgene i Vanløse og hun drog nytte af de indhøstede erfaringer derfra. En af disse erfaringer var nødvendigheden af at opnå status som en selvstændig distriktsskole, der ikke var underlagt en anden skole. En anden erfaring var at sikre forsøgsskolens videnskabelige status gennem ansættelsen af skolepsykologer og en tredje erfaring var at undgå utidig ekstern kontrol med forsøgsresultaterne. Faktisk lykkedes det Nørvig at undgå ministeriel kontrol indtil 1953 og dermed sikre et uforstyrret arbejdsmiljø uden ekstern evaluering af skolens fremskridt og elevernes faglige niveauer (Nørvig, 1955, p. 124f.). Erfaringsmæssigt kunne arbejdet med alternative pædagogikker opleves som grænseoverskridende og provokerende på mange, og de nævnte betingelser kunne mindske de problemer, der kunne blive følgen af dette.

Men hvorledes kunne det lykkes at realisere et brohoved for transgressive praksisser i den danske skoleverden, som Emdrupborg forsøgsskole vitterlig blev? Her er det først og fremmest væsentligt at holde in mente, at mange af mellemkrigstidens yderligtgående og provokerende reformpædagoger og deres arvtagere efterhånden var blevet en del af systemet. Eksempelvis var Arvin blevet rektor for Danmarks Lærerhøjskole, Sofie Ribbjerg var blevet inspektør for to københavnske hjælpeskoler og Anne Marie Nørvig altså inspektør for den nystartede forsøgsskole. Den reformpædagogiske bevægelse kunne altså ikke længere karakteriseres som en protestbevægelse og forsøgsskolen nød da også støtte fra alle syv af landets lærerforeninger. Desuden blæste der andre politiske vinde end i mellemkrigstiden, idet socialdemokratiet og det radikale venstre udøvede betydelig indflydelse over folkeskolens udvikling på alle niveauer. Således var de ledende aktører bag etableringen af Emdrupborg forsøgsskole forankret i den socialdemokratiske bevægelse og de havde gode forbindelser til de højeste politiske niveauer.

Mellemkrigstidens transgressive praksisser var med andre ord blevet en del af efterkrigstidens normalbillede. Men det er i den forbindelse værd at bemærke, at der med forsøgsskolens etablering og efterfølgende praksis skete en bevægelse i retning af mere myndighedskontrol. Dermed kom reformpædagogernes arvtagere i nogen grad til at deponere deres frihed til transgression hos myndighe-

derne, men samtidig gav myndighedernes blåstempling nye friheder og handlemuligheder. Dette vil vi se nærmere på det følgende.

### **Institutionaliseringen - Forsøgsråd og Statens Pædagogiske Forsøgscenter**

Fra 1950'erne satte en samfundsmæssig rammesætning af forsøgs- og udviklingsarbejder sig igennem. Første skridt sås da Undervisningsministeren i 1950 med en paragraf i folkeskoleloven blev bemyndiget til i forsøgsøjemed at afvige fra folkeskoleloven (Knudsen 1985, p. 20). Senere blev tilføjet 1958-lovens forsøgsparagraf (§64), der gav undervisningsministeren bemyndigelse til at iværksætte forsøgsarbejder (Undervisningsministeriet 1958).

I 1962 tog staten det første initiativ til oprettelsen af et statsligt forsøgscenter. Statens Pædagogiske Forsøgscenter, som det kom til at hedde, blev åbnet i 1964 (Undervisningsministeriet 1964). Dets formål var oprindeligt knyttet til den blå betænkning fra 1960, der bar præg af den reformpædagogiske tænkning, der også havde afspejlet sig i forsøgsarbejder tidligere i århundredet, og som nu havde fundet vej ind i skolelovgivningen. Man ønskede at forsøg på centret skulle bidrage til at føre 1958-loven ud i livet. Staten anvendte således en egentlig forsøgsinstitution som et led i en transgressiv proces, hvor formålet på længere sigt var at påvirke folkeskolens undervisning.

Forsøgs- og udviklingsarbejde i folkeskolen blev med disse initiativer formelt set institutionaliseret, men staten havde via lovgivningen taget kontrollen over, hvilke forsøg der kunne tillades at finde sted, og hvilke der ikke kunne. Som et videre skridt i den retning blev Folkeskolens Forsøgsråd oprettet i 1969 af undervisningsminister Helge Larsen for at skabe forbedrede vilkår for forsøgsarbejdets finansiering, ledelse og udbredelse (Florander & Skov 1985, p. 55). Forsøgsrådet havde til opgave at bistå ministeriet i forbindelse med vurdering af ansøgninger om støtte til undervisningsforsøg (Folkeskolens Forsøgsråd, 1985). Støtte fra rådet indebar konsulentbistand og i det hele taget en udpræget grad af systematisering af forsøgsarbejderne, hvor sigtet var erfaringsudvikling og opsamling. Dette element af videnskabeliggørelse i forsøgs- og udviklingsarbejderne, som man derved havde tilføjet, kunne bidrage til at legitimere dem og samtidig give dem en vis status og accept, uanset deres eventuelle transgressive karakter. Dette må anses

for vigtig i forhold til den rolle, de ville kunne spille i mulige kulturforandringer i folkeskolen.

Institutionaliseringen af forsøgs- og udviklingsarbejdet i folkeskolen gav anledning til en stigning i antallet af undervisningsforsøg, men ikke alle ansøgninger blev godkendt. I midten af 1980'erne fik helt op til 2/3 af ansøgningerne afslag grundet økonomiske begrænsninger (Glæsel & Grønsved 1985, p. 92). Sammenlignet med hidtil fik forsøgene en helt anden status på skolerne og i det offentlige rum, hvorved også de transgressive processer, der kunne knytte sig til dem, ændredes. Med en legitimering og blåstemping fra staten, var deres potentiale som aktiviteter, der kunne provokere og udfordre værdier og normer blevet grundlæggende ændret. Som legitimerede af staten måtte man acceptere dem, selv om de i høj grad stadig kunne både provokere og udfordre eksempelvis internt på den enkelte skole. Også de forsøg der fandt sted på Statens Pædagogiske Forsøgscenter oplevedes af nogle som en provokation, der gav anledning til diskussioner, og som formentlig har bidraget til at flytte grænser. Da centret blev nedlagt 2006, var det da også af partier i opposition til de, der oprindeligt oprettede det. Det var partier, der ikke tilsluttede sig reformpædagogisk tænkning, som man hævdede stadig prægede centrets arbejde (Undervisningsministeriet, 2005).

Uanset forsøgenes karakter, var det her og også tidligere et fælles vilkår, at de skoler og klasser der deltog generelt var underlagt samme prøvesystem som gjaldt for folkeskolen generelt. På samme måde som med Vanløseforsøgene vil det i realiteten sige, at de normer og værdier, som netop sætter sig igennem i evalueringer, også samtidig blev afgørende i vurderingen af forsøgsarbejderne; de blev kriterier for forsøgsarbejdernes succes. I kraft af evalueringers tendens til at konstituere praksis og smitte af på forståelser af pædagogik og undervisning, har de på den måde upåagtet kunnet fungere som en faktor, der, trods forandringer, grundlæggende har kunnet fastholde skolens kultur på afgørende punkter, nemlig i forståelsen af viden og fagligt indhold.

### **Konkluderende bemærkninger**

Forsøgs- og udviklingsarbejde i folkeskolen har som sit formål at udfordre og ændre eksisterende undervisningspraksis, og dermed også at konfrontere og overskride normer og værdier i både den ek-



sisterende pædagogiske kultur og i miljøer, der har indflydelse på denne kultur. Der bliver dermed tale om processer præget af kompleksitet. De træk og eksempler fra udviklingen i 1900-tallet, som vi har valgt at inddrage, kan belyse dele af denne kompleksitet.

De tidligste forsøgs- og udviklingsarbejder, fandt sted i tiden inden staten introducerede en formel rammesætning. De var drevet af initiativer fra personer med i mange tilfælde en psykologfaglig baggrund og som politisk kunne placeres blandt radikale og socialdemokrater. Når de forsøg de iværksatte havde en transgressiv karakter og ligefrem blev betegnet som "oprørske" eller "rebelske" og i nogle tilfælde endda blev lukkede af myndighederne, skal det ses som et resultat af de værdier og normer for pædagogisk tænkning, som de repræsenterede. Den usynlige pædagogik som reformpædagogikken repræsenterer, står som en modsætning til den autoritære skoles mere synlige og langt stærkere rammesatte pædagogik, som havde domineret indtil da.

I perioden efter konteksten for forsøgs- og udviklingsarbejder blev ændret med introduktionen af en formel rammesætning i midten af 1900-tallet ses en stærk opblomstring i deres antal. Det er nu ikke længere kun forbeholdt nogle få særligt privilegerede og ressourcestærke personer med de rette forbindelser at iværksætte forsøg, men en mulighed der blev åben for alle. Til gengæld skulle staten godkende, hvilket alt andet lige naturligvis kunne betyde, at de forsøg, der rummede en særligt høj grad af transgressivt potentiale, kunne blive sorteret fra. På den anden side, kunne langt flere skoleforsøg nu netop opnå legitimitet, også på trods af eventuelle modsætninger lokalt på den enkelte skole og i lokalområder, hvis blot de kunne opnå statens godkendelse. En sådan blåstempling eller godkendelse forsynede samtidig forsøgsarbejderne med en vis status, som formentlig i sig selv kunne initiere igangsættelsen. Til gengæld har man til tider også set, at de kunne leve deres eget isolerede liv på skolerne (Jensen m.fl. 1992). Uanset dette må man forvente, at de har igangsat mange diskussioner lokalt, der på længere sigt har kunnet føre til ændrede holdninger, værdier og normer, og dermed flytte grænser.

Imidlertid synes de forskellige forsøgsråds<sup>3</sup> autonomi over tid at være blevet indskrænket – ikke mindst i kraft af at folkeskolerådet ikke længere rådede over eget budget i modsætning til de tidligere råd (Skov, 2005, p. 58). Med den sidste rektor for Danmarks Lærer-

højskole Tom Ploug Olsens ord, tegner der sig et billede af, at initiativer til alternative forsøg i stigende grad blev selekteret af de bevilgende myndigheder (Olsen 1985, p. 81). Dette afspejler en proces hvor forsøgs- og udviklingsarbejder i stadigt stigende grad er blevet underlagt statslig regulering og derved også skiftende politiske betingelser. Dette har haft stor indflydelse på deres transgressive potentiale og de betingelser, de har haft for at folde sig ud.

### Noter

- 1 Christian Hansen-Tybjergs udkast til Foreningen for eksperimentalpædagogiks historie, april 1946. Historisk-Pædagogisk Studiesamling, mappe 2, sign. 203, side 8ff.
- 2 Københavns Stadsarkiv, Emdrupborg Skoles Arkiv, Nørvigs papirer, Udkast til "Pædagogiske Synspunkter"
- 3 Folkeskolens forsøgsråd (1969-1987), Folkeskolens udviklingsråd (1987-1993), Folkeskolerådet (1993-2002), Grundskolerådet (2002-2006), Rådet for evaluering og kvalitetsudvikling af folkeskolen (2006-)

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## ”Hvor viljen er lov og fornuften i eksil”

Fællesskabets grænse i sørejsens fortælling, ca. 1600

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På stranden ved Port St. Julian nord for Magellanstrædet møde med Atlanterhavet udfoldede sig den 2 juli 1578 et optrin, der i sig selv var en gentagelse henvendt imod fremtiden. Sir Francis Drake, i færd med sin jordomrejse, henrettede Thomas Doughty, en gentleman, som også havde været blandt ekspeditionens ophavsmænd. Doughty undgik hængning, for som gentleman havde han ret til en mere værdig død end den leveret af galgen, der i disse år var uløseligt forbundet med Englands nødstedte underklasse, som i den koloniale litteratur optræder som sværme af lediggang (Hakluyt, 1877, 160-161). Det blev i stedet skærets møde med blokken, der tog livet af Thomas Doughty.

Historikere har i århundreder prøvet at forklare, hvorfor Drake slog Doughty ihjel. For den nationalistiske historiefortælling i det 19. årh. var denne begivenhed potentielt en ubehagelig plet på en mand, som denne tradition foretrak at ophøje til et emblem på nationens rejse imod imperiets storhed (eks. Cooley, 1830, bd. 2, 250; Vaux, 1854, xxxvii. Se desuden Heinsen, 2011). Spørgsmålet om årsagen skygger imidlertid for en anden historie om selve det at fortælle om sådanne demonstrationer af fællesskabets grænse som den udstilles overfor det rejsende fællesskab i lovens beherskelse af overskridelsen. Hvordan kunne sådan en historie berettes, og hvad tjente denne vidensproduktion?

Foucault minder os om, at straffens spektakulære synlighed i renessancens offentlige henrettelser kan forstås som led i et politisk ritual, der producerer en magt til at udsige sandheden om fællesskabet (Foucault, 1991, 54-56). Indtrykket af, at Doughtys henrettelse med fordel kan tænkes som en performance, der producerede fællesskabets grænse som en synlighed for øjnene af et tavst fællesskab, forstærkes af, at Drake efterfølgende holdt en oration. Seancen synes på denne måde at være et forsøg på at etablere et hierarki i fællesskabet, hvori kun autoriteten besidder evnen til at artikulere fællesskabets sandhed og kan fremvise denne visuelt. Folket selv står tavst tilbage. Machiavelli viser, hvordan en sådan tænkning af loven som en distribution af sandhedsmagt i tiden var bundet til en forestilling om en rituel tilbagevending. Politiske enheder er bundet til tid, hvilket medfører entropi. Kuren imod dette forfald er en begivenhed, der kan vække frygt og fastholde folket som lydige subjekter under suverænen (Machiavelli, 1975, 459-463). Fællesskabet er således afhængigt af sin regelmæssige genfødsel, der er knyttet til autoritetens evne til at stå synligt foran fællesskabet og vise det fundament dette bygger på samt transgressionens eksemplariske konsekvens.

Vi bliver imidlertid også med Foucault mindet om, at sådanne performative ordener er ustabile. De er i sidste ende afhængige af det folk, som på en gang skal være vidner til den sandhed ritualen udfolder og samtidig skal produceres som undersætter. Og netop Drakes henrettelse af Doughty kan bruges til at studere denne besynderlige selvforstærkelse som den nedbrydes, når den ikke godtages af tilskueren, hvis perspektiv muliggør en forskydning. For her er resultatet ikke tavshed, men derimod nye muligheder for talen.

Iblandt publikum fandtes en mand ved navn John Cooke. Han er trods denne rejses store bevågenhed så godt som ukendt for historikerne. For min egen historie er han dog særdeles væsentlig, da vi fra hans hånd har vi en sjældent kritisk fremstilling af det rejsende hierarki og dets brug af loven. Hvis henrettelsen af Doughty læses som et politisk ritual, der skulle producere tavs subjektivitet, kan denne begivenhed kun tænkes som fejlslagen i lyset af Cookes narrativ. I stedet er begivenheden en lejlighed for Cooke til at fremstille rejsens politik som knyttet til en geografi ”hvor viljen er lov og fornuften i eksil” (Cooke, 1926, 157. Alle citater er egen oversættelse)<sup>1</sup>.

Cooke lægger ingen fingre imellem. I hans øjne er Drake intet mindre end en tyrann og en morder. Konflikten bunder i en peti-

tesse som Drake hænger fast i og udnytter som en anledning til at beskyldte Doughty for både trolddom og mytteri. I en passage overlades Doughty, bundet til masten, til en af sine modstandere, der tæsker ham for øjnene af besætningen. Her viser Cooke imidlertid, at Doughty ikke var alene. Seancen får en af Drakes underkommanderende ved navn Thomas Cuttle til at forlade skibet. Denne deserterer efter at have udtalt, at han i stedet for at acceptere Drakes handlinger hellere vil kaste sig i "kannibalernes hænder" (ibid., 151-153). Cooke reflekterer efterfølgende over fællesskabet og dets 'tyranniske regering', der står imod enhver ærlighed og kun virker igennem frygt (ibid.). Og dette er ikke nogen positiv universel frygt, der sikrer et sundt princip som hos Machiavelli. Frygten er i stedet knyttet til det arbitrære og tyranniske. Derfor er den eneste retfærdige handling desertionen, og Cookes egen fortælleposition er implicit ækvivalent med Cuttles handling.

Det er fra denne særdeles radikale position, at Cooke beretter om henrettelsen ved St. Julian, hvor Drake "sprøjtede alt sin gift imod Doughty" (ibid., 154). Begivenheden fremstilles som en farce, hvor Drake manipulerer med sin besætning og lover dem billig rigdom, hvis de følger ham videre. Dette er det stik modsatte af den retfærdige refundering og tilbagevenden til fællesskabets oprindelige princip. Med sine løfter holder Drake fællesskabet hen, men der er enkelte besætningsmedlemmer, som ytrer deres modstand, f.eks. endnu en af Doughtys sympatisører, der efter retsagen ifølge Cooke udbryder: "General, dette er hverken lov eller acceptabelt for retfærdighed" (ibid., 157). Og selve henrettelsen er tilsvarende ude af stand til at give fællesskabet sit fundament. Doughty er ganske vist tapper og eksemplarisk, men ophøjelsen af fællesskabet udebliver – ikke mindst fordi Drakes efterfølgende oration fremstår som en parodi, der ikke lever op til lovgeringens spektakel. Drake erklærer da også, ifølge Cooke, at han er en "dårlig orator, som er vokset op uden lærdom", og selvom Drake argumenterer for, at fællesskabet nu skal være præget af enhed, er han den første, der bryder dette princip ved at slynge om sig med trusler (ibid., 163-167). Den utilfredsstillende oration synes at fremhæve, hvordan lovens ritual ikke forener fællesskabet ved at producere dets sandhed, men i stedet er knyttet til en verden af kontingent tale. I Cookes fremstilling omvendes det performative politiske ritual således og bruges til at udstille lo-

vens krav om en universel gyldighed som et skjul for partikulært begær.

Disse radikale forestillinger er forholdsvist sjældne i de overlevede rejseberetninger, der i stedet tager andre former, når de skal beskrive politik. Sådanne fortælleformer, og særligt de af beretningerne, der gør krav på mærkatet ’historie’, er imidlertid ofte skrevet op imod et uhåndgribeligt hele af fortællinger, der ifølge historiernes egne udgrænsninger af denne tale som ’overskridelse’ ofte hævdes at have cirkuleret blandt sømænd. I konteksten af dette opgør bliver Cookes beretning ækvivalent med disse marginaliserede fortælleformer – i sin modsætning til ekspansionens officielle historiografi. I resten af denne artikel vil jeg undersøge denne historiografi og forsøget på at berette i et sprog, hvor modstand kan begribes på en ’sikker’ facon, som er kongruent med den fordeling af sandhed, der udøves af lovgivningen. Dette sprog står i kontrast til det kontingente fællesskab som Cooke udfolder. Og Cookes narrativs videre historie kan bruges til at illustrere dette forsøg på at korrigere sproget om rejsens fællesskab og dets grænse, for denne tekst blev med dens inkorporering i en større fortælling omformet.

Jeg hævdede i indledningen, at denne spektakulære begivenhed var en gentagelse. Det kan i første omgang forstås bogstaveligt, for på stranden ved St. Julian havde Drakes besætning fundet en galge bygget af en gammel fyrgransmast (Fletcher, 1628, 69). Dette levn pegede direkte imod den figur, som Drakes ekspedition synes at have modelleret sig over – Magellan, der under jordomrejsen godt 60 år tidligere havde overvintret i Port St. Julian og under opholdet forhindret samt afstraffet et mytteri blandt sine mænd.

Men gentagelsen skal også forstås som en handling, der knytter nutiden til fortiden. En kobling, der etablerer kontinuitet imellem, hvad der i renæssancen ofte blev set som en falden samtid, og en historie, der giver eksempler på det universelt sande. At denne begivenhed har karakter af en gentagelse peger dermed på dens position i en større fortælling. Og denne universelle historie er knyttet til eksemplet, som i Renæssancens historieforståelse var denne gentagelses primære modus (Hampton, 1990, 1-19). Det fortidige eksempel har på denne måde tilbudt sig som en handlemåde, og tidens historiske fremstillinger iscenesættes ofte som kataloger for sådanne imitationer. Det er i denne funktion, at vi finder Magellans historie gå igen i Drakes, og det er ikke usandsynligt, at Magellans



historie i skriftlig form har fulgt Drake på rejsen. Fortællingen om bedriften florerede i samtiden og optrådte på engelsk blandt andet i Richard Edens oversættelse af Peter Martyrs *Decades* (1555). I så fald synes teksten af have haft sin intenderede virkning, for Richard Eden præsenterer i den førnævnte oversættelse værdien af sin teksts lagring af viden, ved dens mulighed for at bevæge læseren til imitation af store gerninger (Eden, 1555, a1).

At fortiden her har haft en indvirkning på nutiden, og at Magellans eksempel er rejst med Drake er ikke kun tydeligt i de gentagende referencer til Magellan i rejsebeskrivelserne fra Drakes jordomrejse. Forbindelsens modus af imitation ekspliciteres i et tekstfragment vedrørende Doughtys henrettelse. Fragmentets kontekst er ukendt, men det er underskrevet af en af Drakes officerer ved navn John Sarocold og har form af et vidnesbyrd brugt i en retslig sammenhæng. Han beretter, at han selv under et middags-selskab i Doughtys nærvær havde sagt om transgressorer, at ”vores general ville gøre klogt i at håndtere dem som Magellan gjorde, hvilket var at hænge dem op som et eksempel for de resterende” (Sarocold, 1854, 167).

Imitationen af den eksemplariske handling, som her i sig selv vedrører produktionen af en synlighed af fællesskabets grænse for øjnene af fællesskabet selv, er en af renæssancens politiske problemstillinger. Og den formede i høj grad muligheden for at italesætte fællesskabet og dets overskridelse i historiografien. Cookes fortælling om Drake peger på denne forestilling, når dens adoption af samtidens historikere undersøges.

Da Richard Hakluyt, der ofte hyldes som den vigtigste historiker over den engelske ekspansion under Elizabeth, i 1589 udgav førsteudgaven af sin monumentale *The Principal Navigations* fremkom historien om Drake for første gang på tryk, og denne version skulle senere blive autoritativ. Politiske stridigheder med spanierne, der mente, at Drakes togt havde været lovstridigt, havde forårsaget et royalt forbud imod at trykke beretninger fra rejsen. Dette forbud blev løftet året før Hakluyts samling, og denne havde derfor fri lejlighed til at trykke fortællinger om Drake (Fuller, 2007, 50-59). Hakluyts normale praksis var at renskrive og redigere førstehåndsberetninger, men i dette særlige tilfælde valgte han, tidspres til trods, helt enestående at bryde sin form og skrive en helt ny fremstilling. Alt dette betød, at han ikke nåede at blive

færdig med fremstillingen før værket var i trykken. Derfor blev fortællingen først efterfølgende indsat på tolv unummerede sider imellem side 643 og 644 i det allerede enorme værk. Dette kan selvfølgelig tolkes som et udtryk for den symbolske betydning af Drakes gerning for en forfatter, der søgte at fortælle om den engelske nations immanente potentiale, men det kan også forstås som værende en konsekvens af Hakluyts utilfredshed med det materiale, der var ham tilgængeligt. Drake selv havde ikke efterladt nogen journal, men i de samme år som Hakluyt arbejdede med sin fortælling, har Drake muligvis selv forsøgt sig med en omskrivning af skibspræsten Francis Fletchers journal. Det menes, at det er denne bearbejdning, der til sidst udkom i 1628 under videre bearbejdelse af Drakes nevø. Hakluyt havde næppe dette materiale tilgængeligt. Til gengæld ligner denne beretning på nogle punkter Hakluyts fremstilling, som derfor muligvis har været en inspirationskilde. I stedet har Hakluyt været i besiddelse af en udgave af Cookes beretning samt flere kortere beskrivelser, hvoraf han trykte en enkelt i sin enorme andenudgave af *The Principal Navigations* fra 1598-1600 (Wallis, 1974, 227-228; Quinn, 1984, 40; Kelsey, 1998, 177-178).

Hakluyts omskrivning af Cookes narrativ, der fremhæver båndet til Magellan, vedrører i særdeleshed denne begivenhed af lovudøvelse, men hans fremstilling står på dette punkt i direkte modsætning til sit forlæg. Doughty erklærer selv sin skyld og garanterer på denne måde begivenhedens sandhed. Drake, der i denne version holder af Doughty som en nær ven, må derfor ofre ham imod sin egen vilje, men som en nødvendighed overfor sandheden og rejsens mulige fremfærd. Efter sakramentet udfolder selve henrettelsen sig som en idyllisk scene af troskab: ”efter at have omfavnet generalen og med en bøn for dronningens majestæt at have taget afsked med sine venner lagde han i stilhed hovedet på den blok, hvor han endte sit liv”. En kort præcis oration følger, hvor Drake prædiker ”enhed, lydighed og kærlighed” og understreger, at fællesskabet under Gud tager denne form. (Hakluyt, 1589)

Hele passagen følger en præcis skabelon, der viser, hvem der besidder evnen til at udøve sandheden og vise fællesskabets fundamentale principper (i båndet til Gud og majestæt) for øjnene af fællesskabet, der fremkommer som tavse vidner til en autoritativ diskurs. Scenen er eksemplarisk og viser hver parts retfærdige

rolle i fællesskabet, som enten taler af sandheden eller dennes lydige tilhørere. Dette er Machiavellis politiske ritual i ideal form, og beretningens ord kunne således forlænge den synlighed som loven producerede.

Det var muligvis tidspres, som nødvendiggjorde fortællingens kortfattedhed, men det betyder i konteksten af Hakluyts værk intet. Læseren var allerede bekendt med modellen og kunne selv udfolde de mangler som dens knaphed medførte. Iblandt Hakluyts samlinger af eksempler findes f.eks. en historie om den franske kaptajn Rene de Laudonniere, som er at forstå som et særligt meta-eksempel, der fortæller læseren, hvordan man udøver et eksemplarisk politisk ritual igennem lovudøvelsen<sup>2</sup>. Laudonnières fortælling fra 1560'ernes fejlsagne franske koloniseringsforsøg i Florida roterer om en række desertioner, som følger hans folks private tale, der motiveredes af begæret<sup>3</sup>. Da en gruppe desertører vender tilbage til Laudonnières fællesskab udspiller sig en scene, der ligner Drakes henrettelse af Doughty, men som er langt mere udførligt beskrevet.

Laudonniere straffer ikke alle desertørerne, men udpeger i stedet de, hvis skadelige tunger har fostret problemerne. Laudonniere demarkerer derved grænsen for en eksistens i det gudfrygtige fællesskab og gør i samme ombæring sin egen tale til eksponent for dette fællesskabs sandhed, imens enhver modstand udstilles som værende uden relation til nogen fælleshed. Den er blot overskridelsen, imens Laudonnières «sande» ord differentierer den gode fra den slette tale.

Kulminationen er henrettelsen. En af de skyldige nægter dog at angre og gør i stedet et desperat forsøg på at benytte situationens mulighed for en perspektivforskydning. Han appellerer således til tilskuerne: "med tanke på at starte et mytteri blandt mine soldater, sagde han til dem: brødre og ligemænd, vil I tillade at vi skal dø med en sådan skam?". Men Laudonniere afbryder ham og demonstrerer dermed, hvem der kan tale: "Og da tog jeg ordet ud af munden på ham og sagde, at de ikke var ligemænd med forfattere til oprør og rebeller imod kongens tjeneste" (Hakluyt, 1903-05, bd. 9, 47). Og igen følges henrettelsesritualet op af en storslået oration efter antikt forbillede, hvor han fortæller fællesskabet, at det er bundet til konge og Gud.

Hakluyt bruger dermed Laudonnières tekst som et eksempel på en adskillelse af forskellige typer tale langs linjerne af en autoritær

lov, der skiller fællesskabet i to. Enten er der den tavse eksistens som tilhørere og tilskuere i en orden ledet af orationen og straffen, der giver fællesskabet en offentlighed, hvori kun autoriteten taler. Eller, på den anden side, den rene overskridelse, som kun kan figurere som en negation af den sandhed, der udøves i det politiske ritual. Dette er Hakluyts lektie henvendt direkte til det rejsende fællesskab, og den tjener gentagelsen - ligesom Drake gentog Magellan. Fortællingen om Laudonnières regering af ordene bliver det stof, som fylder manglerne i den korte omfortælling af Drakes jordomrejse – en model, der forskyder andre fortælleformer, ikke mindst Cookes radikale kritik.

Dette meta-eksempel muliggør således imitationen, imens det udvider den sfære for subjektivitet som det politiske ritual udøver ved at lade det gå igen i sin fortælling. Bogens sider bliver på denne måde en videreførelse af den politiske sfære beretningen fortæller om, og når denne bliver genstand for en politisk genfødsel, står eksemplariteten for øjnene af læserne. Laudonnières fortællinger viser således Hakluyts forståelse af sin egen teksts performativitet. Og da Hakluyt flere gange understreger, hvordan rejselitteratur med fordel kan medbringes på rejserne for at "holde mænds tanker beskæftigede fra værre forestillinger, samt at hæve deres sind til mod og høje gerninger", må denne tekstlige udstilling af genfødsel forstås som en henvendelse til selve det rejsende fællesskab (Hakluyt, 1877, 166).

Dette understreges af Hakluyts forord til Laudonnières fortælling. Efter sin oprindelige engelske udgivelse i 1587 (dedikeret til Sir Walter Raleigh) inkluderede Hakluyt den relativt lange tekst i andenudgaven af *The Principal Navigations* – en handling, der med værketts undertitel *of the English Nation* in mente påkalder sig ekstra opmærksomhed. Hvorfor inkluderer Hakluyt en tekst om fransk kolonisering i et værk om sin egen nations immanente potentiale? Hakluyt forklarer selv historiens relevans. Den skal tjene som et eksempel blandt andet for kolonisterne selv:

[...] som gennem læsningen af min oversættelse, du [Raleigh red.] vil have advaret om at være opmærksomme på den utilstedelige negligering i at skaffe viktualier, samt om sikkerhed, uordenerne og mytterierne, som opstod blandt franskmændene, med de store ubekvemmelighe-

der som deraf fulgte, hvorved de, igennem andres ulykker, kan lære, at undgå det samme. (Laudonniere, 1587, epistle dedicatory)

Koloniseringens historie skal derfor tjene som en model for ekspansionen selv. Den skal give rejsens magthierarki en diskurs, og denne diskurs er eksplicit politisk, da den handler om ulydighed og regering.

Historiefortællingerne fremhæver således værdien af den politiske tale og demonstrationen af sandheden igennem den offentlige henrettelse. Og disse lektier henvender sig til dem, der skulle gøre gerningen efter. For sin eftertid blev Drakes navn, såvel som den geografi, der var så nært forbundet med hans handlinger, da også netop en påmindelse om lovens og eksemplets handlekraft.

Richard Hawkins blev i midten af 1590'erne den sidste engelske kaptajn under Elizabeth 1. til at følge Drakes spor igennem Magellanstrædet. Han skrev i 1622, efter en årrække i spansk fangeskab, et værk om egne bedrifter samt sin generations store ekspeditioner. En bog, der i høj grad handlede om forholdet imellem eksempel, lov og overskridelse og henvendte sig som en lektie til fremtidige søfarere. Hawkins var realist. For ham var den eksemplariske straf ikke noget mål i sig selv. Han var bevidst om, at straffen altid risikerede at blive opfattet som provokation og dermed kunne lede til mere uorden. Han havde givetvis hørt fortællinger som Cookes og tolket disse som forvanskninger af det mandat til bekræftelse som ritualet tildelte tilhørerne. Og Hawkins advarer kontinuerligt imod faren ved søfolkenes tale og dens 'imagination'. Men straffen havde også sin rette tid, og denne tid vedrørte netop talen. I forbindelse med gennemsejlingen af Magellanstrædet, hvor han fulgte i Drakes sejlrende, bemærkede han:

Ved mange lejligheder er det højst skadeligt at undlade at reagere på og straffe mumlen og knurren, når disse i sig bærer sandsynlighed for at vokse til et mytteri, at lede til splittelse, at modsige retfærdigheden eller hvis en anset eller dygtig person går ind for dens intention. Den kloge guvernør skal afhugge denne hydras hoved i begyndelsen. (Hawkins, 1622, 223)

Det er ikke tilfældigt, at denne passage ytres i forbindelse med beskrivelsen af det farvand, der var uløseligt bundet til Drakes handlinger. Men handlinger som disse er ifølge Hawkins ikke tilstrækkelige i sig selv. Også selve billedet på det tavse, arbejdende skib skal gøre et arbejde i denne opdeling af verden, for i dette billede skal folket selv genkende deres tavsheds værdighed og forene sig med deres byrde. Problemet er ifølge Hawkins instruktion til fremtidige søfarere, at folket taler i ethvert ledigt øjeblik - en tale, der tager form af 'contradictions' og 'murmurs'. Og når folket først selv taler deres forestillinger, kan de ikke længere reformeres af ordene: "at forvente fornuft af almindelige mennesker er [...] som at søge råd hos en galning" (Ibid., 219). Den eneste løsning er et succesfuldt møde med fortiden. Han understreger dermed, hvordan den Hakluytske forestilling om forholdet imellem skriften og imitationen også indeholder en henvendelse direkte til de talende folk på dækket:

Alle de, som følger havet må have vore forfædres ældgamle disciplin sat for deres øjne. Forfædre, som i konformitet og lydighed til deres ledere og kommandører har været som et spejl for alle andre nationer. Med tålmodighed, tavshed og lidelse har de gjort hvad, der er blevet dem befalet. (ibid., 220)

Hawkins, der flere gange refererer Hakluyts værker, må blandt andet have haft fortællinger som Drakes (i Hakluyts variant) og Laudonnieres i tankerne. Fortællinger, hvor folket fortæller dets tavsheds retfærdighed, og hvor talen fordeles i lovudøvelsens demonstration af fællesskabets synlige grænse. Med historien for øjnene skulle den åbning Cooke så emfatisk giver stemme lukkes<sup>4</sup>.

For en samtid beskæftiget med fortællingen af loven som en genfødende, tavshedsproducerende eksemplaritetsmaskine var Cookes fortælling forbundet med den monstrøse hydra og dens indbildninger. Denne klagetale bar en fortælling, som ikke var forenelig med den rolle ordet var udset overfor det rejsende fællesskab. Når koloniseringens samtidige historikere derfor forsøgte at korrigere fortællingerne om rejsehandling, som i tilfældet Drake, var det fordi, de så teksten som værende direkte knyttet til muligheden for selve projektets succes. Historien måtte agere som eksempel, der kunne benyttes af en nutid præget af strid. Igennem imitationen af store

handlinger fra historien kunne denne nutid reformeres, og derfor var den historiske videns karakter afgørende. Og en succesfuld imitation af det evigtgyldige kunne sætte et nyt eksempel, der igen kunne animere og være forståeligt som historie. Konfigurationen af forholdet imellem loven og transgressionen fortæller derfor om produktionen af en synlighed, der skulle skabe tavshed. En logik, som både vedrører selve ritualet og dets fremtidige fortælling. Drakes demonstration af lovens kausalitet på stranden ved St. Julian lader sig derved forstå i lyset af en forestilling om behovet for en kontinuerlig genfødsel igennem et politisk ritual, der forbandt en fortid af eksemplariske gerninger til en nutid i konstant fare for at falde over i sin modsætning. Og eksemplariske fortællinger om sådanne genfødsler præger tidens fortællinger om det rejsende fællesskab. Cookes fortælling blev således ikke en del af samtidens autoritative fortælling om sig selv, fordi den understreger denne performative ordens skrøbelighed ved at gøre den til genstand for en forskydning. Dermed demonstrerer Cooke en subjektivitet, der kan fortælle affirmativt om muligheden for at modsige ordenen. I stedet finder man den koloniale diskurs i et løbende forsøg på at afskrive sådanne alternative fortællinger ved at portrættere sproget som værende splittet imellem det sande og sandhedens rene overskridelse.

### Noter

- 1 Man fornemmer en historie, der handler om asymmetrien i konstitueringen af subjekter. Begivenheder som dem ved Port St. Julian er konstitutive for en subjektivitet, der har mandat til at fortælle om disse hændelser. Men dette mandats agens er ikke kontinuert med den magt, som muliggør dette talende subjekt igennem lovgivningen. Derfor kan dette subjekt også fortælle en polemisk historie, som på en gang er afstedkommet af, men også imod magten. Dette er hvad Judith Butler kalder ’agensens ambivalens’ (Butler, 1997, 15).
- 2 Hakluyt havde selv oversat denne beretning, og det har været spekuleret, at han sågar har måttet stjæle denne fra sin franske kollega Thèvet under sit ophold i Paris i årene 1583 til 1588 (Fuller, 2009, 46-48).
- 3 Værdien af teksten er ikke mindst af praktisk karakter i forhold til den engelske kolonisering af Virginia. Kolonisterne, der i 1607

drog imod Virginia havde med sig et sæt af instruktioner, som med stor sandsynlighed er skrevet af Hakluyt, der var investor i ekspeditionen. Disse instruktioner drog en række praktiske hensyn, som eksplicit henviser til Laudonniere-ekspeditionen. Se [Hakluyt] 1606.

- 4 Hawkins blev den sidste englænder til at gennemsejle Magellanstrædet indtil John Narborough gjorde ham kunsten efter i 1669. Mellemtiden til trods var Drakes gerning dog ikke glemt. Narboroughs mænd forbandt øen med 'sand retfærdighed', og en af hans underordnede genfortæller i sin rejsejournal historien om Doughty (Wood, 1699, 64). Levn fra Drake blev fundet i landskabet ligesom Drakes mænd havde fundet levn fra Magellan. Og disse levn bandt sig til en historie om orden og exces. Dette var et sted for loven. Narborough selv synes at have delt denne opfattelse. I hvert fald brugte han lejligheden til at tale til fællesskabet. En oration, som forbandt deres egen dristige gerning direkte med Drakes heltemod. Mellemtiden havde ikke ødelagt Drakes eksemplaritet, som for Narborough kunne bruges til at skabe enhed i hans vægelsindede fællesskab (Narb[o]orough, 1711, 43).



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# Dolphins Who Blow Bubbles

## Anthropological Machines and Native Informants

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### Introduction: Transgressions at the Cove

In Louie Psihoyos' Oscar winning documentary *The Cove* (2009), the thermal black and white camera work of the opening credits foreshadows a scene of slaughter. Disturbingly, a line of shapes appear. Their forms are being systematically hacked by a silhouette wielding an axe. Uncannily, the curves suggest a line of bodies. The buildings and tall chimneys make it difficult to avoid the association of concentration camps. The credit sequence is macabre in its exuberance of black and white processed flesh. Gradually, the shapes begin to suggest non-human animals. The eye begins to discern the outlines of slain dolphins. These appear *en masse*.

Much of Psihoyos' film is driven by the passionately knowledgeable presence of ex-dolphin trainer, Richard (Ric) O'Barry who was famous for his dolphin training in the influential *Flipper* series (1964-1967). Afterwards, the show's five star dolphins were relegated to dolphinariums. According to O'Barry, one of them - Sally - committed suicide due to the depression and stresses of captivity. As a result, O'Barry converted to hard-core activism. The documentary exposes the capture, trafficking, incognito slaying and food packaging of dolphins in one specific place: the fishing town of Taiji, Japan. The film claims that the village has the highest rate of dolphin

slaughters. Stylistically inspired by the cinematography and 'heist team' elements of *Ocean's Eleven* (Soderbergh, 2001), Psihoyos subtextually adopts elements of a Hollywood action narrative.<sup>1</sup> While the documentary relates geographical, economic and scientific "facts", it deploys a Hollywood "protagonist-antagonist-victim" plot.<sup>2</sup> The good 'guys' (women included) launch a rescue mission to save dolphins, hopefully, in their hundreds of thousands. The protagonists must pit themselves against the antagonist, or the Japanese fishermen and fishery commissions. The heroic goal is to cinematically blow the whistle on the atrocities committed against the many dolphin species.

The task of saving and rescuing a species in the multi-billion dollar dolphinarium business presents but one aspect of the insurmountable opposition. The other is the mass slaying of the dolphins rejected for trafficking. These are brutally harpooned in a secret and bloody cove. It is this scene of horror that Psihoyos and his hit team will address, even if together they cannot achieve the "grand narrative" of the Hollywood *denouement*. Rather, the heroic triumph will be the making of the film itself. The rescue team operates like commandoes making their dawn raid over rocky impasses. HD technology covertly films the operation from floating rocks, all thanks again to Hollywood set designers, and acts of stealth and bravery in dive-gear. By the time of its theatrical release, the film's footnotes can announce certain achievements, apart from the capture of the footage and its public dissemination. There are limited victories: government mandarins get fired and the school children of Taiji will not be forced to eat dolphin meat loaded with mercury. The film's epilogues suggest that a rolling Schindler's list for dolphins is a viable activist choice.

Provocatively, my initial interpretation argues that *The Cove* plays out the "tragic triangle" plot of perpetrator-victim-rescuer with an emphasis on an ethically charged goal. In an aside, Psihoyos declares that you are either "an activist or not". One is either on the side of the liberator, however limited such successes may be or, one colludes with the perpetrator. Despite its cruder binary oppositions, *The Cove* offers a range of voices within its smart, poetic, profound and rousing strategies of bringing animals into the cinematic frame. The film does so by raising questions that ride exuberantly on Giorgio Agamben's well established work on the "anthropological ma-

chine" (*The Open: Man and Animal*, 2004). The film's capacity to swim with its dolphin "others" can allow me to read it against the grain of its American-Asian binary.

To help with this reading, I will adopt two searchlights useful for illuminating the film's colliding currents. One is Gayatri Spivak's approach in her difficult but magisterial *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (1999). From the outset, she announces her aim to occupy many paradoxical positions. Her aim is discover that "(im)possible perspective" of the "native informant" (1999, p. 9). According to Spivak, this informant will be well versed in the grand narratives of European philosophy and literature, without denial but with critique. The native informant can offer a voice that is sensitive to the history of colonialism.

In *The Cove*, any direct references to the history of colonialism in Asia or the shadow of World War II are absent. Yet the film does not entirely repress such voices; rather, it allows them a marginal space. When reflecting on Japan's dolphin slaughter and whaling policies, one interviewee, indigenous to the Caribbean islands, suggests that Japan is simply fed up with the West telling it what to do. After all, one of the Caribbean islands, Guadalcanal, was the World War II scene of atrocities committed by both American and Japanese soldiers.<sup>3</sup> This one-off voice offers an echo of colonial pasts.

Diving below the film's superficial construction of an American-Japanese divide leads to another site: the threshold connecting and separating humans and dolphins. Giorgio Agamben's counter-humanist "anthropological machine" (*The Open*) remains influential in helping cultural practitioners, ecologists, scientist and artists make and unmake the cat's cradle that binds human with nonhuman animals. As Agamben argues, the machine "functions by excluding as not (yet) human an already human being from itself, that is, by animalizing the human, by isolating the nonhuman within the human" (p. 37). As Martin Puchner points out in his illuminating article "Performing the Open" (2007), it is important to trace the connect points between Agamben's pivotal concept of the "exception" from *Homo Sacer* (1998) to *The Open's* anthropological machine. As Puchner underlines, there is a crucial overlap between the idea of the "bare life" that falls into a zone of legal exception and the animal state of human statelessness. Puchner cites sources that refer to interrogation techniques used at Abu Ghraib; prisoners were treated like dogs

(2007, p. 25).<sup>4</sup> The human is turned into an exception which, in this case, is the animal already prepped for violation.

In *The Cove*, the re-weaving of “exceptions” has a different goal. In one sequence, the tremendous “intelligence” and “self-awareness” of the dolphins is highlighted. Dolphin zoologist Dr. John Potter cites their ability to micromanage human-animal situations. Moreover, dolphins pursue sophisticated play by creating wonderful air bubbles that can be analysed semiotically. Dolphins can be ‘read’ and addressed as an animal stand-in for the native informant. As such, they can provide signs, data and discourses from their lives which, to echo Spivak, emerge from an “impossible” (non) position. With this in mind, my approach is to examine what conceptual overlaps can be forged between Spivak’s concept of the native informant and Agamben’s anthropological machine. By so doing, I aim to read *The Cove*’s creative contradictions as guiding me to a hybrid concept, that of the “animal/human informant”.

### Informants by Any Other Name

Indeed, this concept of an “animal” emerging from the native informant is already brewing between the lines of *A Critique of Post-colonial Reason* (1999), published one year after Agamben’s *Homo Sacer* (1998) and three years before *The Open*. Agamben’s works are Eurocentric yet capable of dismantling their precursors. Spivak reads this tradition by making purposefully creative “mistakes”; in turn, these lead to the “name for that mark of expulsion from the name of Man” (Spivak 1999, p. 6). By “Man” read the white, western and male, individualist subject, or what I might term the hyper-anthropomorphised subject of western culture. The subject’s “expulsion” propels “Man” into another, more indefinite space. Agamben’s zones of “indeterminacy” and “exclusions” (2004, p. 37) are available to the native informant. Splicing together the differing concepts developed by Agamben and Spivak can further dissolve the animal/human binary in such a way that a different model emerges.

As an aid to deconstructing this binary, Derrida’s celebrated essay “The Animal That Therefore I Am” (2002) is a great aid. Here he criticises the restrictions of “the” before the noun animal; the definite article which deceives with its catch-all category (2002, p. 392). Indeed, Derrida even makes a rhetorical plea for embracing the

sheer heterogeneity of both animal and, by corollary, human/non-human potential in the form of “*all living things*” which too often “man does not recognize as his fellows, his neighbours or his brothers”.<sup>5</sup> *The Cove* compels such recognition from the spectator by connecting the dolphin’s abilities to blow air rings with that very capacity which links us to them, namely, the self-reflective skill of recognition in the mirror. Even without underwater mirrors, the scientist-divers who blow bubbles at dolphins find that the latter return the complement. The zoological research on dolphins blowing bubbles has examined their play behaviour in cognitive terms (McCowan, Marino, Reiss, Vance, Walke, 2000). The scientific discourse includes language which refers to the bubble-producing animals as “surprised, curious or excited” (2000, p.98). The language of surprise and curiosity can apply equally well to humans at play. What puts humans and dolphins on the same plane is this emotional capacity for self-recognition. Agamben’s project in *The Open* is to make an indeterminate zone that does not surrender to anthropomorphism but to finding the thresholds which see human and nonhuman characteristics overlap. He avoids the question of emotions which *The Cove* brings to the fore.

As part of this approach, Agamben must meticulously follow Heidegger’s lectures, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (1929-1930). Heidegger provides the foundational concept of the “open” (*offen*). For Heidegger, it is humans who can see the open, not animals. Though Agamben spotlights Heidegger’s susceptibility to breaching the divide between humans and animals, it is through a concept of the “open” that both can meet (2004, pp. 61-62). Agamben criticises Heidegger’s “error” (2004, p. 75) or, his failure to grasp that the anthropological machine could “still produce history and destiny for a people” (*ibid*). Agamben underlines how seventy years after Heidegger the stakes are different and reveal how

...man has now reached his political *telos* and, for a humanity that has become animal again, there is nothing left but the depoliticization of human societies by means of the unconditional unfolding of the *oikonomia*, or taking on of biological life itself as the supreme political (or rather, impolitical) task (p. 76).

“*Oikonomia*” is what Aristotle referred to as those aspects of economics which structure people and resources, not the *khrematisike* of money begetting money. In the world of global markets, *oikonomia* and *khrematisike* do conflate. So what Agamben tracks as the machine turning humans into animals is the turning of animals into humans, ones either trafficked or protected (2004, p. 77). And like trafficked humans, bartered animals fall into the zone of “filthy” profits.

*The Cove* dedicates its visual and voice-over rhetoric to the task of representing trafficked dolphins as smiling slaves. The demands to jump hoops, be cuddled and be kissed by aquarium visitors leave the dolphins with calloused mouths in constant need of medication. For O’Barry, these animals discover neither joy nor play. They are turned into sweat-shop fodder. Their native environment is open sea. Dolphins are sonic creatures and especially sensitive to incarcerating sounds. The screaming and cheering of crowds adds yet more stress. Here, the anthropological machine can be read as powered by a global, capitalist system with no care for the welfare of its “workers.” The film enables the spectator to make an inevitable association between the dolphins and the plight of other humans suffering trafficking and slave labour. Psihoyos’ anthropological machine enmeshes the human with the dolphin so as to reveal how human biopolitics controls dolphins within an aggressively chrematistic context. Even hoops and bubbles are about dirty money.

To do the work of postcolonial critique would mean exposing how biopolitics would remove the distinction between animals and humans, a systemic removal that permits “lesser” humans to be positioned as abused animals. In this regard, the degraded human and the exploited human can meet around the concept of the native informant. To shed light on this ‘reading otherwise’, Spivak traces the bestial representation of the human in *Jane Eyre* (2011 / 1847) and the figurations between mythical beasts and oppressed humans in Mahasweta Devi’s “Pterodactyl, Pirtha, and Puran Sahay” (1995). Spivak is thorough in connecting the novel’s figuration of Bertha Mason as the repressed and colonised female subject, with the tropes of animality. When Agamben (2004, pp. 37-38) refers to the indeterminacies between human and animal life, that is, the overlaps and separations which make “neither” one nor the other, he argues that the “bare” life is precisely this too. Spivak’s reading of



Mason also locates something which is “neither” animal nor human but a thing which becomes the narrative’s conquered subject.

There is more at stake here than the statelessness of the native informant as a figure of less than humanised animality. The bare life that becomes the animal-human network of indefinite thresholds sutures itself between dominant western and indigenous cultures. Such suturing becomes more transformative in Devi’s novella in which an underpinning narrative figure is the mythical presence of a pterodactyl. For the western scientific mind, the creature might be a scientific anomaly. But the villagers regard the dinosaur as an omen of famine and extinction. As Spivak underlines (1999, pp. 144-145), Devi’s novella does not choose between interpretations which favour the mythical informant over western objectivism. As the narrator argues: “think if you are going forward or back...What will you finally grow in the soil, having murdered nature in the application of man-improvised substitutes (1995, pp. 156-157). The novella’s ecological message is overwhelmingly pertinent. The reference to “murdered nature” gives the native informant an ecological informing.

In *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, animal studies and ecosophy are not Spivak’s focus. Yet it is her choice of case studies that help me to develop a concept of native and animal “informing”. As Agamben argues: “the non-man is produced through the humanisation of the animal: the man-ape, the *enfant sauvage* of *Homo ferus*, but also and above all, the slave, the barbarian, and the foreigner, as figures of the animal in human form” (2004, p. 37). Agamben’s Eurocentric emphases only tread on the territory of postcolonial deconstruction that is Spivak’s hallmark. Nonetheless, foreign, barbarian, colonised, ape-like or even cetacean-like, there is an indeterminate zone of bare life between the colonised animal-human and the colonising human-animal. The dolphins of *The Cove* are captured between their animality and their status as colonised species-beings, trammelled up in a zone of exception, beyond human justice yet entirely bare in its wake.

### **Bare and Self-Aware**

In his chapter on the anthropological machine, Agamben links bare life to a “state of exception” (pp. 33-38). Indeed, one of the underlying theses in *The Cove* is the notion that cetaceans and whales de-

serve exceptional treatment because of their ontological closeness to our own humanness. Agamben confronts the core concepts of 'exception' and 'bare life' by analysing how each emerges through the other. In *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998) there is the chapter "The Ban and the Wolf" (1998, pp. 104-111) which foreshadows the animal-human thresholds in *The Open*. The myth of the werewolf emerged as that which is "neither man nor beast" but "dwells paradoxically" in both human and animal territories (1998, p.105). Bare life constitutes a liminal zone (105-106). Agamben uses the word "threshold" to define what is "neither simple natural life nor social life but bare life" (p. 106). In *The Open*, Agamben lacquers his zone of indeterminacy with negatives. Thus there is neither consolation (torture animals not humans) nor the humanist conflation of the animal with the human (give primates human rights). However, Agamben's indeterminate space lacks a place where animal others can speak back. Spivak's concept of a native informant can be a conceptual stepping stone to an animal informant which has its own set of behavioural signs.

My aim here is not to run the philosophical labyrinth of Wittgenstein's profound joke about talking lions.<sup>6</sup> My concern is *The Cove's* figuration of dolphin otherness. This hinges on how the film's human characters and the filmmaker's montage relate their different concepts of mammalian "self-awareness". Ric O'Barry tells the story of how he brought out his television so that Sally, who played Flipper, could watch her own show. O'Barry remarks that she could recognise herself and tell herself apart from co-star Susie. O'Barry is adamant in his philosophy that the dolphin's capacity to be conscious and intelligent means these smaller cetaceans should be a globally protected species.

But a more complex matter is that of communicable intelligence. Appearing in one scene and voice-over, Dr. John Potter argues that scientific evidence about dolphins' cognitive skills contributes to only one part of our understanding. It is important to participate with the dolphins in their native environment. Here, Dr. Potter's experience as the zoologist with the measuring stick turns into a "visceral" experience; he can "lock eyes" with the dolphin. Potter explains that dolphins know "how to create innovatively out of their own imagination". In these latter voice-over segments, Psihoyos' film shows exquisite shots of dolphins turning over as

they view themselves in mirrors, and with the audiovisual accompaniment of the words “create innovatively”, a dolphin blows its air bubble then swims gracefully through it. One of the team’s free drivers, Mandy-Rae Cruickshank, talks about the quality of contact between herself as a diver and the dolphin: it is one where even though “no words are spoken...on another level, there is a clear understanding”.

Dolphin-human communication requires its own semiotics, with signs which are embodied within regimes of behaviour. In *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthuman Theory* (2003), Cary Wolfe adroitly examines the philosophy and semiotics of animal behaviour. He sets out Derrida’s seminal essays on animal-human liminality. Wolfe paraphrases Derrida, explaining how for the latter, the “difference” in modes of communication between animals and humans is a matter of

*degree on a continuum of signifying processes disseminated in a field of materiality, technicity, and contingency, of which “human” “language” is but a specific, albeit highly refined instance (p. 79).*

In the above passage, there is a hint of the zone which can segue with Agamben’s sites of indeterminacy yet welcome the native informant. To recall Spivak, the native informant’s purview is the unsettling of established norms of language and epistemology.

In the Derridean sense, the native / animal informant will operate at a sight of *différance*. Wolfe turns to the work of systems theorists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Valera (*Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding*, 1992). Put plainly, animals do not conduct a linguistic exchange as we do. However, animals are engaged in a “linguistic domain” and do engage in behaviours that “constitute the basis for a language, but...are not yet identical with it (1992, p. 207). Wolfe sutures together Derrida’s sensitivity to the existence of a human-animal continuum of “linguistic” behaviours with important suggestion made by Maturana and Valera. The latter argue that there is a difference between decoding the signs manifesting from an animal’s behaviour and the behaviour itself. Thus, between the behavioural sign and the behaviour is a site of *différance*. In “Eating Well”, Derrida brings his concept into a discussion

of animals and humans (1991). Its companion concepts, namely “trace” or “iterability”, all combine to make those “possibilities or necessities, without which there would be no language” and, importantly “*are themselves not only human*” (1991, pp. 116-117).<sup>7</sup> In fact, Derrida uses a curious term next to the human, that is, the “infra-human” (*ibid*) which contributes to making a space for the native, human, swimming informant.

Psihoyos has edited images of Cruickshank free diving with dolphins in such a way, that together, the human-animal group produce a beautiful underwater ballet. When she speaks about her communication with them as an “understanding” that is “without words” she is engaging with a range of physical signs. There is communication, yet that which is “said” occupies a zone of *differé-ance*. Even though there is communication, what the dolphins are actually “saying” cannot be translated but perhaps deferred to yet more movements. Between and within the sounds, the arcs, the sonar clicks and songs, the behavioural signs and the denotations and connotations emerge an astonishing range of meanings. There are a series of shots that show dolphins taking part in “language” experiments. We see them pointing at squares on cards with their noses and always responding vocally. Dr. Potter points out the anthropomorphising limitations of experiments with sign language. He emphasises that we think that dolphins should learn “signing language” from us. But what if we were to learn from their language? We could learn by listening to the animal informants themselves, and surrender to their territory of signs.

### **Conclusion: Humans Who Blow Bubbles**

Between Agamben’s concept of bare life, Spivak’s native informant and Derrida’s animal of many signs, there is an emergence of many acts of informing which can draw us humans closer to our animal others. Psihoyos’ film liberates the possibility of an animal informant whose language can meet the humans who gently enter their native territory. The one serious difficulty with *The Cove* is the opposition of Western rescue team to Asian slaying machine. There is an inevitable and strong echo of Western condescension to an indigenous practice that has existed for centuries. My response to the film is disgust at the slaughter. I want to see the dolphins freed, no trafficking and all dolphin killing stopped. I no longer eat fish un-

less it is specially farmed, as globally, sea animals need their fish. The consumption of fish by economically privileged humans needs to be radically reduced. But intellectually, I cannot ignore *The Cove's* neo-colonialist discourse. According to the film, at the IWC (International Whaling Convention), the Japanese have allegedly bought votes from Third World countries in return for development money. One white western critic describes this as prostitution. But this is a sanctimonious accusation from a participant in the very economies that historically and even now, are responsible for much of the damage done to Third World economies. There needs to be a critique of postcolonial economics and an activist agenda to address these problems. Japan is an odd case in point. It is not a Third World Country but maintains its cultural practices around dolphin killing and whaling. O'Barry meets Japanese citizens who are unaware of the degree to which their packaged fish contains dolphin meat. Nor are they aware of the mercury counts. The film allows such contradictions to bubble to the surface.

As spectators, Psihoyos' film takes us into a world of paradoxes which inevitably implicate us. If Agamben theorises a zone of indeterminacies and exceptions between animal and human, I have argued for the three terms - native, animal, human - which can find their own zones of conflict and overlap. The spectator as a humanely-natively-cetacean being can enter the film's spectacular zones of blue. But this glorious blue will turn into a horrifying, thick and almost pure red when the camera reveals the slaying of those dolphins that will not be shipped to the dolphinarium. The aerial shots of the red water and the horrible dying sounds of the creatures leave me in tears at each of my viewings. In "Eating Well", Derrida does not pull his punches when it comes to the issue of exploiting animals. He compares the contemporary carnage of animals and DNA experimentation to an act of producing new concentration camps. For him, abattoirs are camps where victims are not eliminated but reproduced for ever more extensive experimentation, torture and extermination (p. 39).

Derrida meets Agamben on the territory of the entirely de-humanised animal. The strength of Psihoyos' shocking visuality in the film's worst scene, horrifying in its bloodied simplicity, is to allow the human to identify as a native informant. She/he can then psychically fuse with the animals and discover the horrible indeter-

minacy between both. This occurs in that red zone. It is one which invites human animals to identify with a site in which all the preceding images of joy and creativity have been extinguished. The spectator's identification with the atrocity is cleverly enabled by a film which turns its anthropological machine into a corralled and miraculous ocean space. After all, one reason it is beautiful to behold a dolphin blowing rings, is that in all our hugely complex humanity, metaphorically and literally, we too need to play and to create: we are humans who blow our bubble rings.

### Endnotes

- 1 See Nerenborg, 2011. The article shares a conversation reported to have taken place between George Clooney and Louie Psihoyos at the Oscars of 2010. Psihoyos declared himself to be a fan of *Ocean's Eleven*, influenced by the heist story-line and cinematography.
- 2 For an extensive analysis of how to craft a triangular plot system see McKee, 1997.
- 3 For an extensive range of diaries revealing everything from first-hand accounts of Americans trophy-hunting for Japanese skulls and New Zealand soldiers discovering the bodies of women islanders, indigenous to the Solomon Islands, violated to death by Japanese soldiers, see Aldrich.
- 4 Details of how interrogation techniques involved torturing detainees by riding them like dogs as well as exposing them to the ferocity of dogs can be found in Jehl and Eric Schmitt.
- 5 This citation is from a different edition of the same essay and is quoted in Cary Wolf, *Animal Rites*, 2003: p. 66.
- 6 For a comprehensive analysis of the Wittgenstein question, see Chapter 2, "In the Shadow of Wittgenstein's Lion" of *Animal Rites*. See original Wittgenstein text in *The Wittgenstein Reader*, ed. Anthony Kenny.
- 7 I take my cue for this citation from *Animal Rites*, p. 73.

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## Icons of Transgression

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This article takes a look at some specific, iconic images that are meant to be particularly transgressive of normality, challenging stereotypical images of American unity and wholesomeness<sup>1</sup>. All iconic representations of actual persons (living or dead) are caught in a dichotomy between elements of normality / familiarity and elements of transgression, but what happens to the dissemination of iconic images when their transgressive qualities predominate? Manipulation of representations of celebrities or famous persons into hero- or other-images can either constitute adversarial or collaborative icon work, and furthermore this icon work can be either oppositional or hegemonic/incorporated in the capitalist sphere of production and dissemination of artifacts<sup>2</sup>. I propose to look at collaborative, yet provocative and anti-hegemonic representations of two 1960/70s icons of transgression: Charles Manson and Patty Hearst, and to analyze how these particular images simultaneously stylize and sacralize these counterculture (anti)heroes, turning the viewer of the icons from passive consumers into ardent worshippers, consumers or cultural agnostics, all according to our ideas regarding the subjects and symbols in question.

Icon-work, as shown in the analyses below, is an interactive process where anyone can become a textual agent or producer, manipu-

lating existing iconic texts/images, or creating new additions to the bank of already existing iconic representations of a given cultural icon, as in the case of more recent representations of Manson and Hearst. Images enter the open field of cultural iconicity where others may contribute freely to elaborating and reinterpreting their iconic status. Historically this has worked to extend the lives of these images and figures beyond the span one might otherwise have estimated for them in an age of cultural acceleration, which is particularly pertinent in the case of what might otherwise have become extremely time-bound and -specific icons of a dead counterculture.

I propose that all iconic representation combines two modes of representation: the images presented are both stylized and sacralized. This duality originates in the connotations of the word 'icon' from two spheres of use of the term: The commercial icon or pictogram which works through simplified representation (i.e. is stylized), and the religious icon which works through embellished representation and through symbolic detail (i.e. is sacralized<sup>3</sup>). A fully worked-up religious icon, or a pastiche thereof as we shall see an example of (depicting Manson) later, tends to borrow very directly from an old formal language developed in specific traditions of worship, but also always adds the specific signifiers that through stylization identify the uniqueness of the icon in question and transgress the old forms.

From the religious connotations of iconicity we as public inherit the position of worshipper. The need for icons is an expression of our longing for something beyond our own subject-hood, a desire to idolize. This need is no longer fulfilled in traditional religious ways, but has become transferred onto other manifestations of the extraordinary, such as heroes, stars, idols. As we shall see, oppositional or anti-hegemonic worship of cultural heroes sometimes fixates on figures that are recognisable as subtypes of the Outlaw (mass murderers, bank-robbers etc.) or as Messianic specimens of particular transgression.

A person who achieves icon status has to be recognisable to a large number of members of a specific group, whether that is an oppositional subculture (defined through age, race, class, belief etc.), a group of hegemonically inscribed consumers, a nation, or the global community: Iconicity presupposes immediate recognition and familiarity. In apparent contradiction of the safety connoted

by familiarity, the iconic person simultaneously has to be extraordinary, whether through his or her achievements, or through image. Some element of the person's appearance, life, story or activities has to transcend the familiarity of everyday life as lived by most of us: Iconicity presupposes transgression of normality. Ultimately, icon status is only achieved when the person imaged represents a combination of familiarity (which echoes in the word 'fame') and transgression of norms (often figured as 'cool').

The activities of the consumer of icons – in both senses of the word consumption – form what I term icon-work. It is convenient to subdivide this icon-work into two broad categories determined by the intention of the consumer, fan or icon-worker: adversarial and collaborative icon-work. By adversarial icon-work I understand the type of intervention which is aimed at destabilising or subverting the icon's function and meaning in the icon-worker's contemporary cultural reality. This type of icon work can be either oppositional or incorporated. To depict Manson as a Satanic icon is oppositional in the sense that only a minority will find this an acceptable practice and something that invites one to collaborate further (but the convinced Satanist will still read the icon work as collaborative), whereas Marilyn Manson's commercially successful collaboration with the two 'seed' icons he feeds on is fully incorporated in the normal capitalist circulation of goods and services, as his numerous fans and followers will attest to, and his entire image circus will be perceived as collaborative icon work feeding off Marilyn Monroe and Charles Manson's pre-existing cache of fame.

Icons, especially over-commercialized and over-familiarized ones, tempt people into actively resisting them, e.g. by defacing them, satirizing them or otherwise tampering with them: The formerly passive worshippers then become iconoclasts. Collaborative icon-work, on the other hand, may take the form of *homage*, imitation, worship and activities to preserve the memory of the icon, etc. This form of activity is often the work of the ardent fan or follower of the icon's original work. Most icon-work comprises a mixture of adversarial and collaborative efforts. All of these activities, whether adversarial or collaborative, ultimately serve only to perpetuate the iconic person or image's status and longevity.

Largely due to the increased commodification and availability of icons, the need for worship has not diminished throughout the last

50 years, despite the apparent secularisation of the post WW II-era. On the contrary, there are now more icons than ever before, and despite the general tendency towards cultural acceleration, many icons formed, or reshaped and reinvented in the 60s and 70s are still potent and present in the commercial and cultural sphere. Iconicity serves as a form of immortality (at least within a cultural or subcultural memory), yet, historically speaking, icons are always specifically situated and mean different things in different eras. Icons have a history, and not all icons are permanent, as witnessed by certain icons slipping out of a culture's memory after some decades. Let us turn now to an examination of how two specific icons of the 1960s and 70s have had their life-spans prolonged. In both cases, Manson and Hearst, popular culture has provided them with an extra lease on life, and specifically in the case of Manson a political dimension has helped overdetermine his icon status.

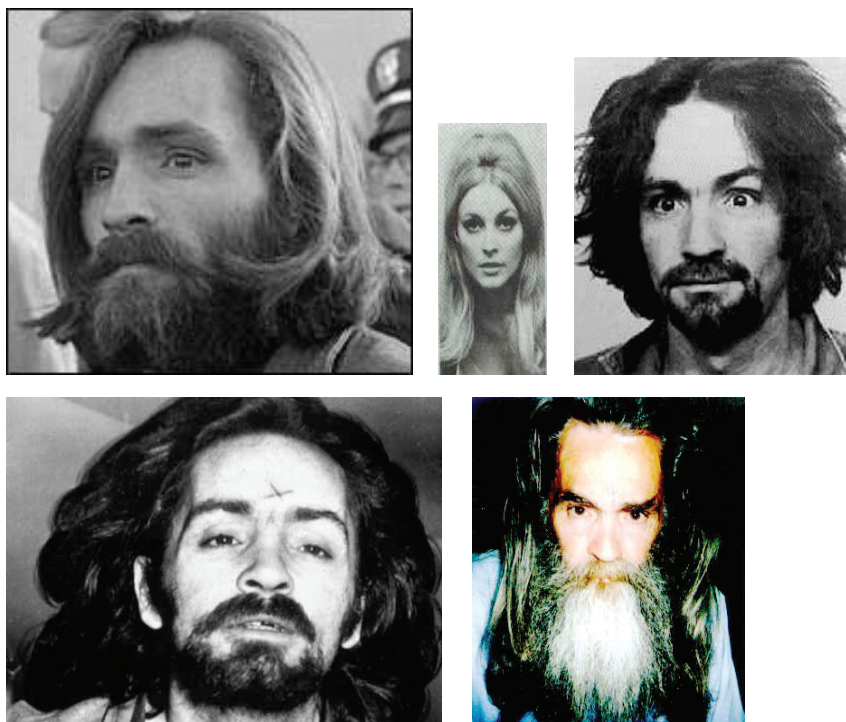
Charles Manson's claim to fame or more appropriately put: infamy, comes from his activities as a cult leader in the 1960s. Having spent much of his youth in prison for a variety of crimes, including burglaries, auto theft and sexual assault, Manson moved to San Francisco upon release in 1967. Here he became involved in the counterculture and a hippy life style, including drug use, sexual experimentation and various criminal activities involving theft and violence. Manson established himself as a minor guru on the San Francisco scene, espousing a philosophical system inspired by Scientology. As a charismatic leader he soon created an extended family of followers, mainly young women. After re-locating to the Los Angeles area the burgeoning Manson family settled in various neighbourhoods, including Topanga Canyon and Pacific Palisades, where a large Manson contingent crashed Beach Boys member Dennis Wilson's house for an extended period of time. Manson at this point believed he could break into the music business and attempted to have Wilson's connections record his songs and sign him to a contract. Manson's links to popular culture are thus inscribed right from the onset of his iconic life. This link was further strengthened after the release of the Beatles' *White Album* in 1968, which led Manson (a long time fan of the group) to read the lyrics of the *White Album*, esp. the song 'Helter Skelter' into his philosophical system.

Briefly put, Manson believed that an apocalyptic time was at hand where a race war between black and white Americans would

break out, eventually leading to the annihilation of the white race, with the exception of Manson and his followers who as an elite would 'ride' the black insurgents and emerge as the new leaders of society. This prognosis Manson believed was detailed in songs such as 'Helter Skelter' – in fact he was convinced the whole album was written specifically for him and the Family and contained specific directions for them to follow. When Manson's race war, which he termed Helter Skelter, failed to materialise he became convinced that he needed to trigger it by committing particularly vicious and bloody crimes, and leading the police to believe that groups such as the Black Panthers were behind them. A number of murders were committed by Manson followers, on his specific orders, to spark off Helter Skelter – including the killing of Sharon Tate and the rest of the members of her household. These and other murders were made to look ritualistic (slogans were written in blood, and horrific multiple stabbings employed as killing method) and were 'signed' as Black Panther—related crimes. The Manson Family were amateurs at killing and were soon arrested for the crimes, having failed to cover their forensic tracks and also having committed numerous minor crimes which meant that the police were constantly looking for members of the Family.

After Manson's arrest the devotion of the family to him and his teachings puzzled and shocked the general public, as did Manson's own bizarre behaviour. He appeared in court with an X scratched into his forehead, claiming that his identity had been X'ed out because he was not allowed to act as his own defence attorney during the trial. The Family followed suit by similarly X'ing their foreheads. Later, during the trial, Manson shaved his head and forked his beard, declaring this to be an enactment of the demonization he felt victim of by the state. He declared "I am the Devil, and the Devil always has a bald head". These two deliberate stigmatizations of Manson's own body have of course been recurrent features of the icon work done on Manson, as over the years he became adopted for the causes of Nazis (in a radicalisation of the X on his forehead into a Swastika) and Satanists. In the spring of 1971 Manson received the death penalty, but as California soon after (in February 1972) introduced a moratorium on executions Manson's sentence was permanently commuted to life imprisonment. Manson staying alive has no doubt extended the

many uses to which his iconic presence can be put, as will be apparent by his insertion into a number of political fantasy scenarios in recent years.



My first 4 images of Manson (with one of victim Sharon Tate inserted in the sequence) show Manson's development from fairly well-groomed hippy-type to wild-eyed fanatic and self-mutilated madman. He ages into a rugged prophet-like apparition in later images. It is the elderly Manson who fuels the imagination of icon workers that use him in a politicized discourse, as witnessed first by a right wing manipulation of Manson's image, photo-shopped into a photo of former Democrat candidate for President, John Kerry, who was the victim of a vicious slander campaign due to his past as an anti-Vietnam War activist. Here a grinning Manson in a suit modelled on Kerry's (as is Manson's hair style) shows the Senator a piece of paper or a photograph (perhaps a snapshot of the Manson victims), and they appear to share a moment of confidence, although Kerry's closed eyes might indicate that the image Manson



shows him is a bit too much to take in. Note the Swastika on Manson's forehead and the Kerry campaign button on his lapel.

In a parallel image, this time used to satirize Kerry's defector, George W. Bush, Manson's photograph (the raw image is the same, and here the hair and attire are not air-brushed or photo-shopped) is used for a different type of collaborative icon work, this time more oppositional in nature. It is accompanied by an amusing text<sup>4</sup> calling for the approval by the Senate of Manson as ambassador to the Klingon Empire (referencing the Star Trek universe). In this narrative Manson works for the Republicans as (crudely) indicated by the replacement of the Swastika on his forehead, which is substituted with a GOP Elephant, the symbol of the Republican Party. Bush and Condoleeza Rice are both 'quoted' as supporting Manson's speedy appointment, saying for instance that "questions about Manson's management style shouldn't be part of the confirmation process".

These two instances will be perceived as collaborative only from a politically partisan view. Both authors use Manson's monstrosity to satirize the party he or she does not belong to. They are both hegemonically inscribed in a party political system, although not officially sanctioned by either party. The main iconic image I have selected for analysis is however a true homage to Manson.

Here Manson is a saint and a martyr, signalled as in classical religious iconography via a representation of his stigmata. We note again the Swastika on Manson's forehead, echoed in even more stylized form in his halo along with pentagrams that associate Manson with Satanism. His other stigmata consist of the bloodstains on his face and neck and the strange umbilical chord of blood stretching from the back of his skull into the background of the icon. The photograph used as template for the icon is the one I showed previously depicting Manson in a particularly wild-eyed moment, taken shortly after his arrest, but prior to the X'ing incident. The choice of red, black and purple colours for Manson's halo and the background (the traditional rays

of light signalling the subject's holiness in religious icons are here turned negative and black) contrast sharply with his pale skin. Taken together with the Swastika this composition and colour scheme serve to underscore Manson's racial programme which the creator of the icon obviously condones.<sup>5</sup>

Manson's afterlife as an icon is thus prolonged by oppositional, collaborative icon work, falling within at least three spheres (which are not as separate as they perhaps should be): political, religious and pop-culture discourses all feed off his image. The strongest infusion of new blood into Manson's afterlife is of course that performed by the act of naming by Marilyn Manson whose popularity has alerted a whole new youth generation to the original Manson story. This example of collaborate icon work I have unfortunately no space to detail further here.<sup>6</sup>

Turning now to Patty Hearst, we encounter a story much intertwined in the same counterculture background as the Manson legend. Heiress Hearst was the victim of an extremely high profile kidnapping in 1974, at the tail end of the armed struggle that militant splinter groups originating in the counter-culture and its anti-capitalist agenda was waging in America. The kidnapers, the bizarrely named Symbionese Liberation Army, carried out urban guerrilla warfare inspired by South American left-wing groups. Their agenda further included an attempt to free African-American inmates from the US prison system which their rhetoric compared to concentration camps and apartheid regime oppression a la South Africa. The SLA saw itself as spearheading a Black revolution in America and took as its symbol a seven-headed cobra snake – each head representing a Kwanzaa principle, such as unity, creativity and faith. After kidnapping Hearst and demanding various types of ransom payment (in kind, to be distributed among the poor), Hearst apparently willingly switched sides and joined the SLA in a bank robbery, generating one of the more iconic images of Patty (now known as Tania) wielding a sub-machine gun.

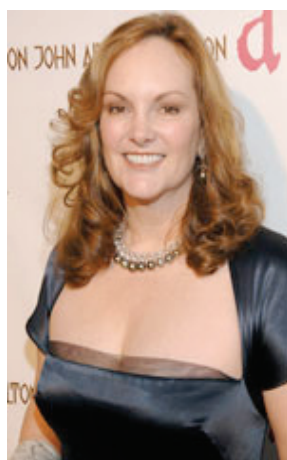
The SLA was eventually hunted down by the police, and in an extremely violent shoot-out which resulted in a fire, most of the SLA members were killed. Hearst and a few SLA members escaped the siege and shootout, but were arrested soon after. During the trial, Hearst again switched persona and claimed that her participation in the robbery was coerced and that she had been sexually



abused and brainwashed during her captivity by the SLA. She was sentenced to a fairly mild stretch in jail, her sentence was reduced by President Carter and eventually she was fully pardoned by President Clinton. A number of iconic cultural texts have been generated by this sequence of events.



My first images show Hearst's startling transformation from society ingénue via revolutionary urban guerrilla (note Tania's Che Guevara beret which positions this image as an homage to the most iconic Che image of all, taken by Alberto Korda on March 5, 1960) to prisoner in her profiled mug-shot. The second pair of images show a trial sketch of Hearst back in millionaire's daughter attire, complete with pearl necklace, which astonishingly recurs in the much later photo of her enjoying her second lease of life as socialite, attending a red carpet function in honour of Elton John. Note also hair style changes through these sequences: blow-dried, sprayed, styled – greasy, straight – back to long, flowing and expensively styled.



The best known icon of Hearst is the image of her in

front of the SLA cobra on a bright orange background. 'Tania' stares aggressively at 'the Man', ready to fire her Thompson gun – another weapon is ready in the background.



This is revolutionary iconography 101, down to the army fatigues, the beret, the weapon and the surprising amount of cleavage shown. The phallic cobra offers a potent reminder of Tania's taming, but also boosts her new-found revolutionary clout. As an ironic paean to this image Warren Zevon has put Patty Hearst into the lyrics of his tall-tale of mercenaries, post-colonial African liberation wars, upright, well-meaning Norwegian boys displaying bravery, sinister Danish power brokers, and CIA engineered betrayal followed by posthumous just deserts in the form of a headless ghost's revenge: "Roland, the Headless Thompson Gunner". The song ends on a didactic note:

The eternal Thompson gunner  
Still wand'ring through the night  
Now it's ten years later, but he still keeps up  
the fight  
In Ireland, in Lebanon, in Palestine and Berkeley  
Patty Hearst heard the burst  
Of Roland's Thompson gun and bought it...

What exactly the meaning of the closing phrase "and bought it" might be is an interesting point of debate. To buy something, of course means to acquire it for money, but also to buy into a story hook, line and sinker. The court case against Hearst revolved exactly around this point: did she buy the rhetoric of the SLA, or was she coerced or seduced, becoming a case of Stockholm Syndrome? My take on Zevon, who has many songs about masculine exploits gone horribly wrong ("Send lawyers, guns and money – the shit has hit the fan" is a line that springs to mind), is that he is warning us all against being taken in by revolutionary bravado and romanticism. To him Hearst is the naïve, protected, socialite teen who temporarily falls for the seduction of revolutionary ardour (a sentiment I would guess many of us can recognize).

For many contemporaries on the streets and squares of Berkeley Tania continued to be a revolutionary hero, turning on her capitalist, propagandist family (owners of a newspaper empire with right wing sympathies), and slogans of 'Free Tania' appeared as graffiti in many places. Tirelessly political prose poet, Robert Gibbons, writes about the day after the Compton siege and killing of the SLA members:

The only thing the woman I was with & I cared about was  
Patty Hearst. Hoping they wouldn't get her, at the same  
time wondering if they'd ever get Nixon, but not as often,  
& never as hard a wonder.

When Hearst recanted her newfound beliefs, the disappointment and confusion was palpable in many circles which were making the same connection between crooked politics, unjustified war and atrocities in Vietnam, poverty in the Black ghettos of LA – and in comparison wondering how bad Hearst and the SLA really were, and whether anyone was ever going to not sell out when the squeeze came.

Our last icon is perhaps a reflection of the numerous ambiguities in the Hearst kidnapping. Mort Künstler's painting *Patty Hearst, 1975* is produced many years after the events and its title date, and depicts an angry Patty in typical 70s house-wife garb, large sunglasses, and wearing her hair in a plain, hennaed, Tania-esque style. Her anger shows in her taciturn facial expression, which however could also be read as displaying complacency, boredom or downright disgust. And in her clenched fist, raised in imitation of the Black Power salute made famous world wide by the Black American sprinters at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics. The Black Power salute is appropriate, given the politics of the SLA, but the power salute had in fact been disseminated more widely throughout the counter-culture by the time we reached 1975, for instance featuring in much feminist iconography. Künstler's icon of Hearst may therefore also be displaying a feminist anger at her violation during captivity, her dead facial expression now signaling an entirely different motivation.



We thus end with the least clear-cut example of icon work in terms of categorization as collaborative or adversarial, oppositional and hegemonic. Künstler may in fact live up to the signification of his name (which translates as 'Artist') in his having produced an ambiguous work of celebratory art – an homage to the Zeitgeist ('1975' being as important as the other title element, the Hearst name) as much as to Patty Hearst. By 1975 the revolutionary ardour has bled out of icons such as Hearst – all the revolutionaries have become housewives as Kathleen Soliah did (arrested in 2001 after more than 25 years underground). Even the bright orange of Tania's background has turned a murky brownish orange as if blood (perhaps that of the shot and burned SLA members) has permeated the wall and dried out. The resulting nuance is so typical of its period that it alone perfectly signals the Zeitgeist of the soured, post-revolutionary American 1970s.

In conclusion, these two transgressive icons have been shown to lend themselves best to collaborative, unincorporated icon-work, and only rarely to enter into more commercial realms – with the exception of often ironic, tongue-in-cheek use in popular music. Divisive icons such as Manson and Hearst, however, tend to live on even long after their initial shock value has worn off.

## Notes

- 1 For reasons of space limitations I exclusively focus on the dissemination of these transgressive icons in an American iconosphere (Mieczysław Porębski's term) in this article, although particularly the Manson case is global in scope as are the musical icon manipulations performed of his image by indie and metal artists.
- 2 This framework for analysing icons is explained in the following article: Bent Sørensen: "Countercultural Icon-work: Adversarial and Collaborative Uses of 'Uncle Sam'", in *Communities and Connections: Writings in North American Studies*, ed. Ari Helo, Renvall Institute, Helsinki, 2007
- 3 In "The French Path to Postmodernity: Bataille between Eroticism and General Economics", Jürgen Habermas neatly encapsulates Bataille's idea of the sacral which serves as my primary point of inspiration for the theses rendered in the preceding: Bataille stands in the tradition of the Durkheim school. He traces the heterogenous aspects of the social as well as of the psychic and mental life back to the sacral element that Durkheim had defined by contrasting it with the world of the profane.

Sacral objects are possessed of an auratic power which simultaneously entices and attracts even as it terrifies and repulses. If stimulated, they release shocking effects and represent a different, higher level of reality. They are incommensurable with profane things and evade any homogenizing mode of treatment" – in *Bataille – A Critical Reader*, ed. by Fred Botting and Scott Wilson (Blackwell, 1991)

4 <http://www.faux-news.com/stories/2005/04/25/>

5 On the website I originally located the image there was a click through link to a further shrine for Satanism and Alistair Crowley which opened when Manson's image is clicked. The link is now defunct.

6 Transgressive indie musician Trent Reznor's uses of the site of the Sharon Tate murders as domicile and studio where he later recorded Marilyn Manson, of course form a fascinating portion of this chain of icon-work and dissemination.

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# The Star Wars Kid and the Bedroom Intruder

## Panopticon or Subversion?

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### The Star Wars Kid

With its relatively brief history the Internet already has a history with its own historical personages. One of these is the herostratically famous Star Wars Kid. A YouTube search of “Star Wars Kid” will bring you to the 1:47 minutes-long video and also to quite a large number of video responses and remixes based on the original video (YouTube, 1). In the video you can see the Star Wars Kid performing in front of a static camera. He is wielding a golf ball retriever as if he was Darth Maul, and as if it was a light sabre from George Lucas’s Star Wars film, *The Phantom Menace* (1999). During the video his performance develops into a kind of energetic, but ungainly dance towards and away from the camera, and whenever he gets close to the camera he pauses a moment to stare aggressively into its lens. This sabre wielding dance has its culmination or rather nadir when he stumbles and nearly falls in some yellow cloth lying on the floor in the bare video studio behind him. When you are watching this video you probably experience mixed feelings. You may laugh, and then be ashamed that you did so. You may be filled with the unsympathetic feeling of Schadenfreude, and then you may feel grateful that it’s not you or one of your kids in the video and feel sorry for the Star Wars Kid.

The actual person in the video was the 14-year-old Ghyslain Raza, a student at the Saint-Joseph high school in Trois-Rivières, Quebec, Canada. He made the film in 2002 in the school's studio, but unfortunately left the video tape there. It was found some time later by another student, it was circulated among his friends, and eventually a video file of it was uploaded to the Internet April 14, 2003 (Hourdeaux, 2010). In 2006 it was estimated to have had over 900 million viewings (*BBC News*, 2006). On YouTube the number of viewings is higher than 22 million. The family of Ghyslain Raza took legal action against the families of the school students who uploaded the video and made it public. The lawsuit claimed that "Ghyslain had to endure, and still endures today, harassment and derision from his high-school mates and the public at large." And that he "will be under psychiatric care for an indefinite amount of time" (Popkin, 2007). The case was settled out of court.

What is it then that the Star Wars Kid is doing in the video? There is a pattern of repetitions in the video as a whole. There are five takes, and you may see the jump cuts between them, and between some of them you even hear the sound of the recorder button being pressed. Apart from the real sounds from his movements you may also hear the Star Wars Kid imitate sounds effects as if it was a professional movie. The action of each take is similar to one another. Basically the Star Wars Kid fights his way towards the camera twirling the imagined light sabre. As he gets near the camera his gaze meets the lens aggressively, until he stops the recording. Understood in this way the camera becomes the opponent from the film, and this opponents is vanquished, his death symbolized by the switching off of the camera.

This video with its five takes, sounds from the recorder, and the Star Wars Kid walking in and out of the frame is metafictional, and it is also an intertextual project. The Star Wars Kid reads himself into the universe of the Star Wars films by his impersonation of a Jedi Knight or a Sith Lord. Through his performance in the video and the production of it he creates a narrative, which for a moment redefines his identity, and this imagined identity is mediated in two senses: It owes its existence to the media, Lucas' films, which are the hypotexts for this video, and it is an actual media production itself. The Star Wars Kid employs the media in an intertextual way to try to understand his own identity, which is not an uncom-



mon thing to do. E.g. in his "*Creator Spiritus: virtual texts in everyday life*" Ben Bachmair has described how media texts for young people are not just a question of mimesis of life, but that the media texts become active elements in a kind of everyday poiesis, in which young people use them to create personal meaning of their everyday lives (Bachmair, 2000: pp. 115-116). Yet the camera is not a mirror in which the Star Wars Kid faces himself. The intertextual project makes the video transcend the idea of the camera as a mirror. The camera is both. It mirrors the performer and it enhances him intertextually, so that he becomes the Star Wars Kid, and not just a Canadian high school student, though obviously he is also that. The conflict between the performer and the camera may indicate that the video is also a sign of a clash between the imagined identity and the real one.

### **Antoine Dodson and the Bedroom Intruder**

Like the Star Wars Kid Antoine Dodson's rise to Internet stardom is based on invasion of privacy. However, in his case it was in both in an involuntary and a voluntary way. In late June 2010 a house intruder allegedly attempted to rape Kelly Dodson in her bedroom in a housing project in Huntsville, Alabama, where he climbed into her bed. A local TV station (YouTube, 2) brought the news in an item that started in the traditional way with the anchor person in the studio, a map of the area, a reporter live at the scene of the crime, but then unusual interviews followed. First with Kelly Dodson herself: "I was attacked by some idiot from out here in the project.", and then a little later in the news report her brother Antoine told the interviewer that he ran to help his sister to fight off the attacker. It is at this point that the item becomes noteworthy because Antoine Dodson's personal style transgresses the genre of news broadcasting. He uses his street vernacular, is totally unimpressed by the institution of television, and his modulation and body language are like music and dance. Antoine Dodson does not speak to the interviewer, but directly and passionately into the camera, in this way first addressing the local television audience: "Well, obviously we have a rapist in Lincoln Park. He's climbin in your windows, he's snatchin your people up, tryna rape em so y'all need to hide your kids, hide your wife, and hide your husband, cuz they're rapin rrbody out here." And then he speaks to

the intruder as he gesticulates into the camera and he bends forward so that the camera distance is closer than what you would expect in an interview of this sort: "We got your t-shirt, you done left fingerprints and all. You are so dumb. You are really dumb, for real." Dodson gesticulates into the camera: "You don't have to come and confess. We're lookin for you. We gon find you. We gon find you. So you can run and tell that, homeboy!" Dodson now looks away from the camera, and the picture is mixed to the reporter, whose style is official and poses a strong contrast: "If you have any information on this crime you are urged to contact the Huntsville police department..."

The bedroom intruder news report now went viral as it was uploaded to Facebook and to YouTube 29.07.2011, so that it has more than 35 million viewings on YouTube. This news video gave birth to numerous remixes, of which The Gregory Brothers' Auto-Tune or songification version has reached the staggering number of more than 85 million viewings on YouTube (YouTube, 3) since its upload 30.07.2010, and it was the most watched video at all on YouTube in 2010 (YouTube, 4).

We have seen that The Star Wars Kid's reaction to his unintended Internet stardom was unhappiness; when Antoine Dodson accidentally became globally famous because of an intrusion into his sister's bedroom, he turned the situation into his advantage as he became an Internet entrepreneur with his own websites that sold t-shirts and other merchandise (Dodson), and with the royalties from iTunes from the Bedroom Intruder Song he has bought his family a new house as reported by *US Weekly's* Celebrity News section (*US Weekly*, 2010). Dodson has appeared on talk shows, and he has shot a reality show pilot episode for Entertainment One about his family moving from the housing project in Huntsville, Alabama to Hollywood (*TMZ*, 2011). It seems that it does not make sense after all to view the story of Antoine Dodson as an invasion of privacy. Where, on the one hand, the attempted rapist's intrusion into the Dodsons' home was a criminal offence, which with good reason provoked Antoine Dodson's flamboyant and outspoken anger, the invasion of his privacy by the media, on the other hand, became a welcome opportunity to rise socially and become a celebrity. The concept of celebrity may in itself offer an explanation why this apparent contradiction is possible.

### **Celebrity and Authenticity**

An explanatory model of why Antoine Dodson is famous and private at the same time may be found in a comparison between the concepts of stars and celebrities. A star as known from the Hollywood film industry has become a star because of her abilities as an actress and the way this ability has been represented by her films themselves and by the marketing of them. The audience well knowing that stars are constructed in this way, may want to know the star better in the sense that we want to know the person behind the star, or as P. David Marshall puts it in his study of the concept of the modern celebrity: "What is Marilyn Monroe 'really' like? Is Paul Newman 'really' the same person as he appears in his films?" (Marshall, 1997: p. 17). A celebrity, on the other hand, does not have so strong a tie to his or her professional functions, which are perceived by the audience as what they are, textual constructions. A celebrity is the combination of textualised stardom and the demand from the audience of the authentic person that embodies the stardom. In this way authenticity is inherent in the concept of celebrity, and audience performance includes the search for signs of this authentic person, which may be like themselves, and in this way may be a figure of identification in a democratic world picture.

Antoine Dodson is nothing but authenticity out of an Alabama housing project, and he has managed to turn this authenticity into some degree of mediated stardom, too, as he has been using the invasion of his home to mediate his private world into the public world of Internet entrepreneurship and fame. Dodson signaled authenticity in his initial appearance in the media. He was not in a fiction program, but in the news, and even there he was less staged than what one might expect because he was totally unimpressed in his language and his gaze into the camera. The contrast between Dodson and the reporter is also one of linguistic style. Dodson's style can be characterized as the one Henry Louis Gates Jr. calls signifyin(g) (Gates, 1988), i.e. an elaborate, Afro-American vernacular, here with word-play, goading and insult. Dodson so to speak broke through the camera lens and the television screen with this form of direct address to the audience, so that there was the simulation of unmediated and popular communication. The Star Wars Kid with his young age, on the other hand, as most of us

could not manage the professional functions as an intertextual version of a Jedi Knight well enough; but with respect to authenticity there was another problem. As a person he was real enough, and the video recording was obviously not professionally made. Yet, though the Star Kid used the technology and media to represent himself, his representation was not as closely connected to everyday life and reality as a demand for authenticity could wish for. The video was first of all intertextual, and it was also metafictional. In this case it was a question of the media invading the privacy and reality of the person as he represented himself as a fictional character from a film, and the location of this representation was an empty video studio. The opposite was the case with Antoine Dodson. Here it was his authentic reality and his social life that invaded the media.

### **Panopticon**

Unfortunately for the high school student now known globally as the Star Wars Kid, the recorded, private moment of self-representation was stolen and made public. The camera, which was used privately, became a surveillance camera, when his privacy was violated, and the video was broadcast on the Internet. In one sense technology is to blame, as a camera was used and not a mirror. In another, this transgression between the private and the public may be viewed in a wider cultural context, the one of the Panopticon.

The concept of the Panopticon as a metaphor for a disciplinary societal construction goes back to Jeremy Bentham's design from 1785 for a prison building where the guards could see all the prisoners. They could not see the guards, but they had the feeling of being watched all the time. The building is round, and the cells are placed in its circumference. The cells are opening through bars to the center of the building where the guard is placed in his inspection tower with a full view of each well-lit cell and its solitary inmate. This prison design permitted cheap surveillance of the inmates, and its effects were believed to discipline them. Consequentially, the function of the Panopticon prison was correctional. The concept of power is inherent in the Panopticon principle as described by Bentham: "a new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind, in a quantity hitherto without example." (Ben-

tham, 1995/1791: Preface) This correctional and disciplinary principle extends beyond the prison:

No matter how different, or even opposite the purpose: whether it be that of *punishing the incorrigible, guarding the insane, reforming the vicious, confining the suspected, employing the idle, maintaining the helpless, curing the sick, instructing the willing* in any branch of industry, or *training the rising race* in the path of *education*: in a word, whether it be applied to the purposes of *perpetual prisons* in the room of death, or *prisons for confinement* before trial, or *penitentiary-houses, or houses of correction, or work-houses, or manufactories, or mad-houses, or hospitals, or schools*. (Bentham, 1995/1791: Letter 1)

It is at this point that the Panopticon principle becomes more than architectural, and it becomes a disciplinary mechanism. Surveillance and the public, but unseen gaze directed towards the individual becomes an instrument of power, and Michel Foucault in his *Discipline and Punish - The Birth of the Prison* develops Bentham's theory into a comprehensive societal system of power and subjection to power. Foucault writes in continuation of Bentham's arguments for his architectural design, that "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (Foucault, 1991/1975: pp. 202-203). Surveillance is disciplinary, and when internalized it assures the power relations of society. This is the Panopticon principle.

One may then ask how the two viral videos discussed in this article relate to the Panopticon principle, surveillance and its disciplinary mechanism. Are the recording and publication of private moments, e.g. on YouTube, disciplinary and a cog in the wheel of societal control? Like many other viral videos these two are of a transgressive nature (Christensen, 2011). The viral videos tend to disobey common thematic, narrative and receptive structures and standards. Narratologically, they are often metafictional, they may for instance foreground their own production through their poor aes-

thetic and technological level. Thematically, viral videos may ignore or transgress the border between public and private, most often in the case of forays into the intimate sphere. It is also typical of many viral videos that their communication mode is ambiguous with regard to the identity of the sender.

When it comes to the reception of viral videos the uncertainty felt about the identity of the sender of the video is paralleled by an uncertainty of how to respond to the video and its characters. Both the Star Wars Kid video and the Bedroom Intruder video are transgressive in these ways. In the case of the former, its character transgresses his identity, he becomes an intertextual construction, and he behaves as a child, though he is too old for it. In the case of the latter, the intrusion is not only into a bedroom, but the video itself transgresses the format and codes of a news program.

Are the characters of the two videos and also their audiences then disciplined, and are their audiences warned not to commit the same undisciplined actions? The answer may be found in the mixed and ambivalent reception the audience has of the videos. One may be repelled, but one may also be enjoying the videos. The YouTube comments testify to these diverse emotions in the reception of the videos. Here is a sample of comments about the Star Wars Kid: "i LOVE the part where he swings the staff", "...is this guy really serious...?", and when one commentator is less than friendly, another answers: " In case you are unaware, this simple comment can be perceived as a serious threat. Cyberbullying can have an adverse effect on peoples lives. One nice comment could have a positive impact on someones life, where comments like this do not. In the future please try to treat others with greater sensitivity and be aware that your words can cause lasting damage." (YouTube 5). And these about Antoine Dodson: "hahahaha lmfa0(: i love this dude!!! hes sooo funny! HAHahaha yall need to hide your people hide your wife hide your kids and your husband cause they rapin everyone out here!! Lol", "Vigilante justice/mockery at its best!", " HEY! i'm the rapist 8^(" and " My favorite gay person in history = Antoine Dodson" (YouTube 6). Though these uploaded videos are instances of surveillance, they are not simply Panoptic in their significance. They also celebrate the unguarded and undisciplined moment, and as the viral videos they are they show an ability to transgress the Panopticon and to be partially subversive.

### Culture of Confession

The ability of these viral videos to be understood as both Panoptic and subversive with their transgressions of particularly the border between the intimately private and the public can be viewed in the light of another of Michel Foucault's concepts, namely his culture of confession as he describes it in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*. By moving the argumentation from the societal mechanisms of Foucauldian surveillance and Panopticon in his *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* to the search for truth and its discourses in *The Will to Knowledge* the hypothesis of this article that viral videos may be disciplinary and subversive at the same time can be tested.

In the first half of *The Will to Knowledge* (Foucault, 1990/1976: pp. 1-73) Foucault proposes a historical exposition of a double, but connected movement in Western attitudes to sexuality. During the last three hundred years sexuality on the one hand has been made into a plurality of discourses, where Foucault sees the point of departure of this development in the Christian confession, in which carnal or sexual actions and behaviour of a so-called sinful nature were given words or turned into words. Later sexuality was categorized and regarded in a societal context, e.g. in a Malthusian perspective or as conjugal sexuality – or non-conjugal, and sexuality was inscribed in the power mechanisms of society with their disciplinary measures. Sexuality also became a rational, scientific discourse, e.g. psychoanalysis in its various forms where it, perhaps as perversions, could be interpreted, again turned into words, in a search for knowledge and the truth. As it can be gathered, sexuality was not denied, hidden away or repressed, and in the will to knowledge about it, there was intertwined a lust for pleasure. Power and pleasure were combined in a perpetual spiral: "The pleasure that comes of exercising a power that questions, monitors, watches, spies, searches out, palpates, brings to light; and on the other hand, the pleasure that kindles at having to evade this power, flee from it, fool it, or travesty it." (Foucault, 1990/1976, p. 45) It is Foucault's point that power and pleasure reinforce one another in this way, and he states that since the period of the use of the religious and ritualistic use the confessional, we in the modern Western world have become "a singularly confessing society" and that "Western man has become a confessing animal" (Foucault, 1990/1976: p. 59). Types of discourses

and genres have arisen to satisfy this need: “interrogations, consultations, autobiographical narratives, letters; they have been recorded, transcribed, assembled into dossiers, published and commented on”, Foucault writes (p. 63). These discourses with their will to knowledge all share an ambition to be authentic so that the truth can be revealed. It seems tempting to update this list with new types such as the Internet social media with Facebook and YouTube, which are often based on ubiquitous smartphones, or with television genres such as talk shows or reality programs.

### **Conclusion: The double nature of the confession**

The article about two of the most popular figures on the internet the Star Wars Kid and Antoine Dobson has used two of Michel Foucault’s theoretical concepts, the Panopticon and the confession, to explain the paradoxical nature of their fame, which is based on an invasion of their privacy. A comparison of the two has shown that their celebrity status is different after all with regard to the degree of authenticity they signal in their self-representation.

The genres of the two videos have migrated from respectively a private video and a news program into viral videos, which are often transgressive. The article has consequently discussed the question of whether the two videos and their distribution have functioned in a panoptical disciplinary way, or whether they are subversive. The answer suggested is that they are both at the same time, and the argument for this paradoxical answer is found in the double nature of the confession, so that both videos are instances of a culture of confession that both discipline and celebrate the pleasure of imagining that you a Jedi Knight or of exposing your personality in a news program. This answer can also be related to the popularity of the social media in general.



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# Transgression and Taboo

## The Field of Fan Fiction

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### Introduction

Fan fiction has been defined by Sheenagh Pugh as "[...] fiction based on a situation and characters originally created by someone else." (2005: 9) According to this definition, fan fiction is predicated upon the crossing of clearly defined textual borders whereby the confines of a given fictional world are breached and settings, events, and characters specific to that particular universe are removed to another. To cite a couple of particularly obvious examples from the literary culture of today, Hogwarts, Harry Potter, and the struggle against Voldemort appear not only in the series of seven novels originally created by J. K. Rowling, or in the many adaptations (films, computer games, etc) that Rowling has authorised, but also in a huge number of texts written by fans and made available on, for instance, the Internet and the World Wide Web. Similarly, Gimli, Legolas, and Frodo and Bella and Edward have been removed by fans from the confines of their source texts and inserted into new ones.<sup>1</sup>

Pugh's definition spells out that fan fiction is "based on" an already existing fictional world. Fan fiction, then, appears to be purely derivative. However, Pugh's definition also shows or dramatises how fan fiction, in being fundamentally dependent on the boundaries it traverses, conjures up those very boundaries. That fan fiction

in this manner is responsible for and the reason why those borders are evoked in her definition has to do with the linearity of the signifier of course. In language one thing necessarily comes after another. But we are left with a sense of an inversion of the supposedly derivative relationship, nevertheless. Similarly, Kristina Busse and Karen Hellekson's outline of the concepts of *canon* – "the events presented in the media source that provide the universe, setting, and characters" (2006: 9) – and *fanon* – "the events created by the fan community in a particular fandom and repeated pervasively throughout the fantext" – first identifies fan fiction as derivative before it hints that fan fiction produces that which it is supposed to originate from: "Fanon often creates particular details or character readings even though canon does not fully support it – or, at times, outright contradicts it. [...] An understanding of canon is particularly important for the creators of fan texts because they are judged on how well they stick to or depart from canon" (9-10). Fanon only makes sense in relation to canon. The writing and reading of fan fiction cannot but produce the very texts they supposedly originate from. Rather than a straightforward relationship of derivation consisting of a source and its copy, we have a kind of loop comprised of a canonical source, which is productive of fanon, which brings about the original text and so on.

The manner in which fan fiction is both the product and producer of canon and canon is both the source and effect of fan fiction recalls the logic of transgression and taboo as outlined by Georges Bataille. Benjamin Noys explains:

These forces [transgression and taboo] are never balanced because transgression has a certain dominance over taboo as the force that makes taboo possible. In the very movement of transgression towards 'infinite excess' [Bataille's term] it solidifies the taboo as it reveals the fragility of the taboo. As Bataille puts it, the taboo can only 'curse gloriously whatever it forbids'. What is forbidden must be possible, for example incest or murder, or there would be no need of the taboo. If it were naturally impossible for us to murder or commit incest then neither possibility would arise. That we do have taboos on these acts makes those taboos secondary to the transgression they rule out. Of

course, at the same time, transgression can only operate as a movement across the boundary of the taboo so, although it may be a 'primary impulse' [Bataille's term], it too is secondary to the limit it crosses. In the complex difference between transgression and taboo which is primary and which is secondary is undecidable and they swirl around each other in the turbulence that Bataille always regards as a play of differences. (2000: 85)

Transgression and taboo, then, are interdependent forces existing in a state of permanent and undecidable imbalance. The governing image is not of a hierarchy of neatly separated opposites, but of two entities spinning around each other in mutually defining ways. Transgression is both a primary impulse and secondary to the barriers it crosses. Conversely, taboos are secondary to the transgressions they rule out, but must already be in place before they can be violated. Whether as primary or secondary, each is in need of the other in order to define itself as different.

### **Fans: Loyal Subjects of Transgression**

Fan fiction is fiction written by fans and fans as producers of fan fiction are the incarnations of transgression as well as taboo. Etymologically, *fan* connotes transgression. According to the *OED*, a fan is an abbreviation of fanatic; and a fanatic is "characterized, influenced, or prompted by excessive and mistaken enthusiasm, esp. in religious matters." As a fanatic, a fan is out of control, or driven by a passion that is somehow in violation of that which is right. Even though the *OED* reminds us that, in its modern uses, the word has lost its connotation of madness, the category of fan remains linked to the idea of a violation of particular limits and is figured as a transgressor of key taboos by representative examples of recent main stream culture. Thus, Tony Scott's adaptation of Peter Abrahams' novel *The Fan* (1996) starring Robert De Niro gives us the fan as someone who sacrifices everything including his family and his job for the sake of his favourite baseball team and who stops at nothing, including murder and kidnapping, to accomplish his goals. Similarly, Annie Wilkes – the "number-one fan" (6), who both resuscitates and abuses her favourite author, in Steven King's award winning 1987 novel *Misery* – turns out to be a homicidal

maniac on top of everything else. But the mad and bad female fan for whom no taboo appears to be sacred is also an extremely faithful and loyal fan, who constitutes the taboo. Annie Wilkes disciplines and punishes her favourite writer out of her respect for his original creation – the Misery books and their eponymous heroine. Her transgressions of the fundamental laws that govern human interaction are grounded in her reverence of a higher law, i.e. the series of Misery books, a higher law which their author has sinned against by discontinuing the book series.

Few fans, if any, are like their Hollywood representations, of course. Fans form a highly inhomogeneous category, in fact, spanning the casual admirer and the devoted disciple. Matt Hills, for instance, attempts a distinction between fan and cult fan – between followers and “a particular (enduring) form of affective fan relationship” (Hills 2002: xi). But, academic discussions of fans tend to favour the latter and more devoted fans who are – like Annie Wilkes – simultaneously in violation and respect of a set of basic laws. For instance, in Henry Jenkins’s early and very influential conceptualization of fans, he appeals to the aspects of transgression and taboo, too. Relying upon Michel de Certeau’s idea of poaching as a particular way of reading against the grain, Jenkins identifies fan writers as “poachers’ of textual meanings” (2006:40). According to Jenkins, poaching connotes more than just the infringement and violation of the law, however. In a manner that recalls Annie Wilkes, he claims that poaching is, in fact, also a form of loyalty. Jenkins relates the concept of poaching to E. P. Thompson’s notion of moral economy which denotes “[...] an informal set of consensual norms [...]” (41) subscribed to by people who were rising up against the authorities in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century. More particularly, peasants justified their revolt against powers that be by appealing to the existence of an original order that the present system allegedly had corrupted. Similarly, according to Jenkins

[...] the fans often cast themselves not as poachers but as loyalists, rescuing essential elements of the primary text “misused” by those who maintain copyright control over the program materials. Respecting literary property even as they seek to appropriate it for their own uses, these fans become reluctant poachers, hesitant about their rela-

tionship to the program text, uneasy about the degree of manipulation they can “legitimately” perform on its materials, policing each other for “abuses” of their interpretive license, as they wander across a terrain pockmarked with confusions and contradictions. (41)

Like watered down versions of the transgressively loyal Annie Wilkes, fans, according to Jenkins, are characterised by a kind of ambiguous or double motivation. As loyalists they save their favourite source text from what they regard as misappropriations by fitting it to their own ends. The notions of appropriating a text respectfully, of reluctant poaching, of legitimate manipulation that Jenkins is developing in the quotation involve the notions of transgression and taboo. The reluctance and hesitance of fans arises out of an idea of the taboo. Similarly, the policing of fans by fans speaks of a strong awareness of the taboo and the extent to which the fans themselves constitute the taboo.<sup>2</sup> To subscribe to the moral economy of a particular fandom, then, involves both the transgression of the original text and the recognition of its authority.

### **Producers: Incorporating Transgression**

Jenkins’ study of fans as poachers was first published in 1988 and focussed exclusively on the Star Trek fandom and the fan fiction circulated in fanzines and other printed material at the margins of mainstream culture. Since then he has come to prefer the conceptualization of fandom as *convergence culture*. He prefers the notion of convergence rather than poaching since it defines “[...] a moment when fans are central to how culture operates. The concept of the active audience [...] is now taken for granted by everyone involved in and around the media industry. New technologies are enabling average consumers to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content” (1). While the notion of poaching is perhaps no longer adequate to capture the ways in which fans participate in contemporary culture, the general notions of transgression and taboo are still relevant all the same. Perhaps they are even more relevant than ever. If we look at the authors and media producers that furnish the source texts in the field of fan fiction, their behaviour has become an inversion of that of their fans. As inventors and originators of specific fictional universes, authors and media producers

constitute the taboo. They legislate what belongs to a fictional world and what doesn't. However, the notion of the active audience means that authors and producers have begun to make room for and incorporate transgression. In fact, taboo courts transgression. According to Jenkins:

Media producers monitor Web forums such as "Television without Pity," planting trial balloons to test viewer response, measuring reactions to controversial plot twists. Game companies give the public access to their design tools, publicize the best results, and hire top amateur programmers. [...] News stories appear regularly about media companies suing their consumers, trying to beat them back into submission. (2)

However, while taboo admits transgression into its very constitution in this manner, a basic sense of difference is maintained between the two. Those in control of the limits of specific fictional universes *monitor, test, measure, and give access* to the audience. They invite their *response, reactions, and make public the results* of their participation. The difference between media producers and companies, on the one hand, and, on the other, media consumers and fans is maintained in this way. Each defines the other. While some form of collaboration may be taking place between the two, the former, the taboo, provokes the latter, the transgression exactly because it is different. Convergence culture rests on and maintains the fundamental difference between fans and media producers.

Rowling's relationship with her fans furnishes an excellent example of literary convergence culture where fans and author are brought together yet kept distinct. In contrast to other writers, e.g. Anne Rice's ban on fan fiction (Pugh 2006: 13), Rowling is famous for acknowledging and welcoming fan fiction. For instance, when, to the complete surprise of most readers of Potter fiction, she declared that one of the key characters in her books, Dumbledore, is actually gay, she immediately added, "'Oh my God, the fan fiction now, eh?'" (Westcott 2008: np). Her remark betrays a keen awareness of the Harry Potter fan fiction and suggests that fans and writers are converging. However, while the two are in a process of moving closer together, they are still separate and mutually defining



entities. Her comment implies that she influences her fans and their fan fiction as the author and originator of the Harry Potter universe. She is the taboo in the form of the author who exercises complete control over her fictional universe, including the sexualities of her characters. Moreover, her statement relies upon the notion of the fan as someone who transgresses creatively the borders of that universe in loyal subjection. This process of the convergence of divergent and separate identities is also apparent in a recent video featuring Rowling. In the video, she addresses her fans in a manner that both recalls Jenkins' terms of convergence and acknowledges the fundamental difference between her fans, the transgressors, and herself, the taboo. In the video, Rowling announces<sup>3</sup> the launching of her web site for Harry Potter fan fiction called Pottermore.<sup>4</sup> Rowling says:

13 years after the first Harry Potter book was published I'm still astonished and delighted by the response the stories met. [...] I'm still receiving hundreds of letters every week and Harry's fans remain as enthusiastic and inventive as ever. So I'd like to take this opportunity to say thank you because no author could have asked for a more wonderful, diverse and loyal readership.

I'm thrilled to say that I'm now in a position to give you something unique. An online reading experience unlike any other: It's called Pottermore. It's the same story with a few crucial additions. The most important one is you. Just as the experience of reading requires that the imagination of the author and reader work together to create the story so Pottermore will be built – in part – by you, the reader. The digital generation will be able to enjoy a safe, unique, online reading experience built around the Harry Potter books. Pottermore will be the place where fans of any age can share, participate in, and rediscover stories. It will also be the exclusive place to purchase digital audio books and, for the first time, e-books of the Harry Potter series. I'll be joining in, too. Because I'll be sharing additional information I've been hoarding for years about the world of Harry Potter. Pottermore is open to everyone from October. But a lucky few can enter early and help

shape the experience. Simply follow the owl. Good luck.  
(Rowling 2011)

The verbal part of Rowling's video announcement exemplifies her high degree of awareness of her fans. Her video is very much a recognition and a celebration of "Harry's fans". She begins by confessing her wonder, pleasure, and gratitude in the face of the passion, creativity, diversity, and loyalty she has witnessed. After casting herself in this manner as the grateful recipient of fan response, she reverses the roles and fashions herself as the exited donor of an exceptional gift to her fans, i.e. Pottermore. Pottermore is an opportunity for fans to "share, participate in, and rediscover" her fictional universe with other fans and, last but not least, herself. So far, Rowling's invitation suggests that Jenkins's recent idea of convergence rather than poaching describes fans and the practice of fan fiction correctly. If fans are invited to produce fan fiction, it doesn't really make sense to conceptualise them as poachers anymore. While the aspects of poaching are side-stepped in this manner, and the emphasis of the spoken discourse is on the sharing, participation, working together and joining in of fans and author rather than transgression and taboo, the latter is particularly present and the former conspicuously absent from the visual aspects of the video.

In contrast to the omnipresence of the second person pronoun in Rowling's spoken address, the visual aspects of Rowling's video contain not a single reference to her fans. Instead, the video combines shots of Rowling, the author, alone in a room and, secondly, computer generated images of her work – i.e. a Harry Potter book. The Rowling shots alternate between medium-shots and close-ups. In the medium-shots she is sitting on a leather couch in the middle of a room. The room is relatively bare and without ornamentation. It forms a semi-industrial space with brick walls, large window frames, lighting equipment to the back and some sort of filing cabinet to the left. The *mise-en-scène* emphasises the traditional image of the author as someone who works on his or her own. She is, moreover, sitting, completely immobile, in the left hand corner of the couch. Her left leg remains crossed over her right throughout. For the duration of the video, her left arm is placed on the left armrest of the couch and her right hand is positioned on her left thigh. She stays completely stock-still with the exception of her face and head which

she uses to underline her speech. Rowling's face, or her talking head, is the focus of the close-ups where motion is used to mimic emotion. A slight shake of her head, for instance, emphasises her feeling of gratitude: "no author could have asked for" (0:20). Similarly, her concluding "good luck" is followed by a little smile to emphasise her feelings towards her fans (1:34). If her fans are represented at all visually, they are reduced to traces on Rowling's face that register her emotions. Not only are these traces reduced to a minimum, Rowling's immobility in the medium-shots tends to contradict her confession of astonishment, delight and thrill. In the very grip of strong emotions, Rowling is figured as unmoved.

The video also features computer generated images of her work, i.e. a Harry Potter book. The images are designed to specifically exclude the representations of fans. In the beginning of the video, individual pages from recognisable volumes of the Harry Potter books are turning as if by their own accord (00:00-00:30). Rowling's work, the source text, does not need a reader. It is – all by itself – literally a *page turner*. Subsequent CGI shots show the pages of the Harry Potter book *coming alive*. As if by magic, and certainly without the help of a reader, origami-like concrete objects emerge from its pages, for instance, a gate with the words "Pottermore" inscribed (00:33), three trees in the shapes of three recognisable letters spelling *you* (00:40), a forest with giant spiders (00:44), a pair of "Harry Potter" spectacles (00:49), the Sorting Hat (00:53), and an owl (01:26). The *you*, the reader, the fan, like all other objects, is produced by the source text rather than its producer.

It is safe to say, then, that there is a certain amount of tension between the visual and the verbal fashioning of the relationship between Rowling and her fans. The almost complete absence of motion in Rowling documented by the video contradicts her confessions of astonishment, delight, and thrill. Similarly, the addressees that are continuously evoked by her speech are glaringly absent from the *mise-en-scène*. Ultimately, the ideas of convergence and participation, sharing and joining in are contradicted in this manner. We are left instead with a sense of fundamental difference between the author, the taboo, and her fans, the transgressors. Rowling courts her fans, inviting them to join in, but makes sure that the fundamental difference between taboo and transgression is maintained.

The maintenance of that difference between taboo and transgression is a necessary condition for the success of the website. First of all, Rowling's promise to furnish a "safe"<sup>5</sup> experience for the reader of fan fiction presupposes a hierarchy of taboo and transgression, author and fan. Secondly, her separate identity as the author of her work is important for guaranteeing the site as the *exclusive* place where Potter audio and e-books are sold.<sup>6</sup> Lastly, maintaining the fundamental distinction between author and fan underwrites the value of the collaborative expansions of her fictional universe. In contrast to the participatory endeavours by her fans, the supplementary information emanating from Rowling is particularly important because it increases the parameters and borders of the known Potter universe authoritatively

### **Conclusion: The Fan Is in the Text**

The notions of transgression and taboo suggest that fans, on the one hand, and authors and media producers, on the other, cannot be conceptualised monolithically as transgression and taboo. Rather, both categories manifest an awareness of and a dependency on the other. Fans violate the boundaries of their favourite fictional worlds by creating fan fiction, for instance, but they do so out of a sense of loyalty to that universe. This loyalty to specific characters, events, and places gives them their identity of fans in the first place. Conversely, authors and media producers, who lay down the law and incarnate the taboo as the inventors and originators of fictional characters, events, and places, achieve their identities by making room for and taking into account fan practices that may violate the very borders they set up. Few writers have done what Rowling is doing with her new web site, of course. Instead, the majority of writers, in fact, rely on their work to do just that. Texts, in creating fictional worlds with boundaries, provoke transgression and make room for fannish production. To qualify as a source text, in fact, a text has to be producerly in this way according to John Fiske. Source texts "(...) have to be open, to contain gaps, irresolutions, contradictions, which both *allow* and *invite* fan productivity" (1992: 42. Emphases mine). Fiske is suggesting that source texts are particular kinds of speech acts that not only map out the boundaries of fictional universes but also request and facilitate their violation through inciting audience participation. To

discuss specific source texts in this manner as taboo and transgression would be highly interesting, but falls outside the scope of this essay, however.

### Notes

- 1 Fanfiction.net lists *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, and *Lord of the Rings* as the three most popular books or series of books for generating fan fiction (<http://www.fanfiction.net/book/#>). Fanfiction.net, which is just one of many sites for fan fictions on WWW contains more than 800,000 fan-fics relating to those books.
- 2 In the field of fan fiction, policing is often institutionalised in the form of the “[...] so-called *beta readers* who critique, read, and help revise on various levels, including spelling and grammar, style and structure, and canonicity and remaining in character” (Busse and Hellekson 2006: 6).
- 3 Thanks to Steen Christiansen for calling my attention to Rowling’s announcement.
- 4 It should be pointed out that Rowling’s initiative is hardly a response to an unfulfilled desire among fans for a Harry Potter knowledge space on WWW. In fact, several web sites for Harry Potter fan fiction are already in existence making available thousands of Potter related fan stories. To give just three examples to add to the one mentioned in Note 1, see, for instance, Harrypotterfanfiction.com (<http://www.harrypotterfanfiction.com/>), which styles itself as “the oldest, (and best) unofficial dedicated Harry Potter Fanfiction site on the net”, Mugglenet Fan Fiction (<http://fanfiction.mugglenet.com/>), and Fiction Alley (<http://fictionalley.blogspot.com/>).
- 5 Interestingly, the nature of the security is never made explicit. Is Rowling offering an environment protected from electronic dangers such as computer virus? Or does her web site offer a moral sanctuary where Rowling will ensure that, for instance, slash and adult material are disallowed?
- 6 That Pottermore in this way becomes a market place intensifies the divide between Rowling and her fans in terms of buyers and sellers and consumers and suppliers.

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Last accessed July 28, 2011.

## Flirting with the Law

### Queer Culture beyond Transgression?

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*We are no longer under the rule of law, but of grace.  
Saint Paul (Romans 6:14)*

*I fought the law and the law won.  
The Clash*

Historically, queer desire has been imagined as destructive of the social order – an ultimate transgression and a quintessential crime. The figure of the queer offender has been conjured by the frequently overlapping discourses of criminology, anthropology, sexology, and most recently, psychoanalysis in both its Freudian and Lacanian versions (Hart 28). Psychological instability, latent or over criminality, and even the mark of psychosis have been linked to queer subjects’ failure to subscribe to the imperatives of compulsory heterosexuality as manifested in the Oedipus complex through which sexual difference and appropriate developmental goals are inscribed in the subject’s psyche. The residue of this disciplinary history through which same-sex desire has been criminalized, infantilized, and presented as corrosive of the social matrix, continues to preoccupy and titillate contemporary modes of representation.

Transgression of the limit – be it a legal, social, moral, or a religious interdiction – has been the trademark of queer desire in two ways. First and foremost, the queer outlaw served as a homophobic fantasy and thus a point of *dis*-identification for the general public.<sup>1</sup> As a homophobic fantasy, the queer outlaw is easily decipherable in late twentieth- and early twenty-first century popular culture through films such as *Single White Female* (1992), *Basic Instinct* (1992), *Butterfly Kiss* (1995), *Talented Mister Ripley* (1999), *Mulholland Drive* (2001), *Monster* (2003), and more recently, *Black Swan* (2010) and Lady Gaga's *Telephone* (2010). All these examples feature psychologically unstable characters who transgress the Oedipal law through their refusal of heterosexuality and the social law through unleashing violence and, ultimately, committing an act of murder.

At the same time, and just as frequently, the queer outlaw also served as the point of self-identification for the subculture's participants. Queer culture has had a long-lasting affair with the notion of transgression. In Foucault's early writing, transgression constitutes the very essence of sexuality: every limit has to be crossed, every rule is there to be broken. Transgression is conceptualized (and romanticized) as a "nonpositive affirmation" ("Preface" 36) – a destructive force that is productive in its very destructiveness, in the havoc it wrecks on the subject's limitations. Following Canguilhem in his later work, Foucault also presented an extensive analysis of the norm and the normative, elaborating and popularizing ideas of transgression, subversion, and resistance to normativity. Influenced by Foucault's comprehensive analysis of a complex interplay between sexuality and power, contemporary queer theorists harbor profound suspicion towards the norm and towards the vision of the social predicated upon the acceptance of that norm. Edelman, Warner, Berlant, Halberstam, and Duggan can be cited as some of the most prominent critics of normativity who emphasize the queer as the unruly, disruptive force – a force of negation and transgression that is, ultimately, outside of the subject's control. These theorists oppose the views expressed by writers such as Andrew Sullivan who famously suggested that after gay marriage becomes legal, gay culture should abandon political activism and settle comfortably within the limits circumscribed by the law and the social norm. Warner responds to Sullivan's conservative vision by contending that sexuality is neces-



sarily messy, turbulent, disrespectful of laws and antagonistic to limits of any sort. He also insists that queer culture, being a culture that is organized around sexuality, has no other viable and ethical choice but to embrace this disruptive and transgressive nature of sexuality and organize politically around that fact.

More importantly, queer subcultures created iconic images of queer outlaws that have been disseminated through literature and film. Transgression of a set limit, be it a law, a moral code, or a social norm, is what often sets these narratives in motion. Most frequently, the queer outlaw figures as the disturber of heterosexual love – a threat to normativity embodied in a heterosexual family or a couple. In other scenarios, the queer character is forced to break the law because the law itself is unfair. One of the obvious examples of a law considered unfair is the infamous Don't Ask Don't Tell policy, which became the topic of many films (*Serving in Silence* [1995], *Investigator* [1999], *Common Ground* [2000], *The L Word – Season 5* [2008]), of which *The Marine* (2010) is one of the most recent examples. In such narratives, the queer outlaw is seen as a hero and the crimes committed are depicted as either justified or forgivable as crimes of passion.

But is every notion of the law and the limit always heteronormative? Are narratives of transgression necessarily “queer”? Can we avoid conceptualizing the law within the framework that constructs sexual minorities as dissidents and queer subjects as necessarily outlaw subjects? This is a difficult question to pose. In asking such a question, one has to avoid the pitfalls of conservative gay writers, such as Sullivan, who dismiss “queer transgressions” as immature, irresponsible, and even politically suicidal. At the same time, this discussion is bound to become crucial in this century as more countries grant gays and lesbians full rights of citizenship and as mainstream visibility of sexual minorities continues to increase. In this paper, I explore recent narratives of queer transgression and argue that the latest evolution of such narratives signals an attempt to redefine queer subculture's collective vision of normativity and law. By focusing on two examples in recent lesbian cinema (*The Kids are All Right* [2010] and *Lip Service* BBC3 series [2010]), I demonstrate that we have witnessed an erosion of the iconic image of a lesbian outlaw as both media events attempt to negotiate their way out of the narrative of transgression. In *The Kids*, this negotiation takes the

form of subverting (transgressing) the narrative of transgression, while *Lip Service* creates a counternarrative within which the law is no longer viewed as exclusively heteronormative. I draw examples from the lesbian tradition of independent cinema because this is the tradition I know best. It is clear to me that, despite many similarities, lesbian and gay male cinemas make two traditions that are distinct, although overlapping. Others should investigate whether my argument applies to recent gay male subcultural production.

### **The “Lesbian Outlaw” in *The Kids are All Right* (2010)**

Released in July 2010, Lisa Cholodenko’s *The Kids Are All Right* enjoyed solid commercial success. The film features a lesbian couple, Nic (Annette Bening) and Jules (Julianne Moore), who struggle to preserve their marriage while raising two teenage children – Joni and Laser. As reviewers noted, the film strikes a pleasant balance between familiarity and strangeness by offering a plot that is recognizable to the mainstream audience (exploring the issues of inter-generational communication, long-term commitment, and trust) yet educating that very same audience about non-traditional kinship arrangements (Shoquist). For instance, Joni and Laser have different biological mothers but are biological siblings as both “moms” used the same anonymous sperm donor. The family Cholodenko chooses to present to the mainstream audience is not a loosely defined assemblage but a tightly knit unit in which kinship ties are based on blood ties. The invisible sperm donor serves as glue that cements the family together in one tight knot of continuous blood relations, which helps the mainstream audience view it as a legitimate family (since heterosexual kinship is based on blood ties).

Even though it was directed and produced for a wide audience, *The Kids* does not break away from its subcultural origins: it is an example of the crossing over of the subcultural content into the mainstream. In other words, its foundation is within the lesbian subculture and its message is adapted for a general public. It speaks the language the subculture understands; as an act of self-representation, it is less in a dialogue with frequently homophobic representations of lesbians developed for heterosexual consumption (in the mainstream cinema) and more in tune with the tradition of indie lesbian cinema of the last two decades on which Cholodenko draws heavily. The director is also very confident about the film’s place in

the larger world: she mentioned that by depicting a lesbian family with two teenage kids, she was simply “tapping into the Zeitgeist” (Karpel). This confidence is important; it is an outcome of both the increase in mainstream lesbian visibility – Ellen Degeneres, Rachel Maddow in the United States; Sarah Waters, Rhona Cameron, Sue Perkins in the UK – and also the subculture’s sense of maturity and accumulated cultural wealth.

On the surface, *The Kids* is certainly not a narrative of transgression. In her interview, Cholodenko states that lesbian families are not that different from heterosexual families and trusts that the mainstream audience is ready and eager to see the normalcy of alternative family life on the big screen. In fact, the lesbian family she depicts in the film is painfully “normal.” They live in a large all-American suburban home, drive an SUV, and stick to conventional gender roles with Nic (the more masculine of the two moms) being the breadwinner and Jules, the softer, more feminine of the two, being the emotional caretaker in the relationship. The couple’s heteronormative lifestyle has not gone unnoticed and the film received some scornful reviews by such prominent queer theorists as Halberstam (“The Kids are Not Ok!”) and Duggan (“Only the Kids Are Ok”).

However, while openly embracing the normative, the film is subtly iconoclastic. Iconic images have a life of their own: they are nodes where collective desires converge and get transfixed. Iconic images frequently function as signifiers of narrative conventions – cultural shortcuts that contain a wealth of meaning. When such conventions change, these images can come under attack as signifiers of these conventions, and can be taken down as no longer relevant. What are the icons that are being dismantled in *The Kids*, if any?

The iconic representation that came under scrutiny in *The Kids* is what I propose to call “a lesbian outlaw.” The outlaw figure has solidified in lesbian indie cinema gradually over the last two decades, personifying the narrative of rebellion and transgression. She comes into focus most prominently as the destroyer of heterosexual love. By winning the heart of a heterosexual woman who is either involved with or married to a man, and ultimately, by destroying their (usually stagnant, inauthentic) relationship, the lesbian outlaw affirms the potency of same-sex desire, celebrates the value of authentic life, and exposes the inherent corruption and

repressive nature of the social norm (the Law).<sup>2</sup> At the end of such narratives, the lesbian protagonist is either punished (in older films), or in more recent movies, rewarded for her transgression

In a transgression narrative, the key actors are Law and Desire that appear to clash but in fact are engaged in a complex dialectic in which the law gives desire its shape and agency. In his brilliant analysis of the dialectic of law and desire, Badiou explains the way prohibition simultaneously activates desire, *and* through the very same gesture, assigns it to its proper place as *transgression*:

The law is what, by designating its object, delivers desire to its repetitive autonomy. Desire thereby attains its automatism in the form of transgression. How are we to understand transgression? There is transgression when what is prohibited – which is to say, negatively named by the law – becomes the object of a desire that lives through itself in the site and place of the subject. (79)

The dialectic of prohibition and desire is crucial in the structuring of the plot that features the lesbian outlaw. The object of the protagonist's love (or lust) is overdetermined by a rich set of overlapping prohibitions: the desired woman is heterosexual, is in a relationship, and is often made even more unattainable by the differences in class, ethnicity, religion, age, or race. To achieve her aim, the subject of desire (the outlaw) thus has to overcome several obstacles (the prohibition of homosexuality, the prohibition of adultery, differences in class, race, or age), and finally, has to face the man who steps in to defend his relationship. The narrative unfolds entirely within the domain of the Law; it is the interdiction that sets desire in motion, yet the law masquerades as the arch-nemesis of desire.

The examples are too numerous to mention – this is a narrative convention that has had a long and rich history. Cholodenko's earlier film, *High Art*, follows this convention. In *High Art*, Lucy, a lesbian artist, is firmly positioned both outside the norm and as the destroyer of heterosexual love. She is independently rich, despises authority, and breaks the rules habitually. She is also a drug addict. Lucy is explicitly sexual, daring, and disrespectful of social conventions that condemn infidelity and privilege heterosexual coupling. She acts as an agent of desire that triggers change in Syd – a hetero-

sexual woman who moves into Lucy's building with her boyfriend James, only to be swept off her feet by Lucy's charisma. Lucy dies from an overdose of cocaine at the end of the film and thus is punished for her role as the destroyer of a heterosexual relationship.

Among the recent movies that choose to celebrate the act of transgression rather than punish it, a popular British TV prison series, *Bad Girls*, provides the most dramatic example. Nikki, the show's lesbian protagonist, is an inmate sentenced to "life" in prison for murdering a police officer. Locked behind bars, she continues to antagonize the Law by disobeying correction officers' orders, inciting dissent among prisoners, and leading a full-blown prison riot. The film insists on Nikki's symbolic innocence by clarifying that her crime was one of self-defense as the policeman had tried to rape Nikki's girlfriend. The law and its representatives – police officers, correction officers, politicians, and bureaucrats – are thus coded as bad, unfair, corrupt, while Nikki's transgression, no matter how gruesome, is justified. Predictably, Nikki's heart gets captured by the most unattainable object of all – her prison wing governor Helen Stewart, a heterosexual law-abiding (and law-enforcing) woman engaged to be married. By multiplying the obstacles, the film intensifies the flow of desire leaving the spectators cheering when Helen Stewart leaves her fiancé, breaks the law by sleeping with Nikki, and then fights hard to get her inmate lover out of prison. Nikki's success is spectacular: the storyline ends with Nikki's release and the unlikely couple kissing in the streets of London. Nikki's multiple transgressions are vindicated, celebrated, and rewarded. The law is there to be broken because the law itself is corrupt. Heterosexual love is also to be destroyed because, well, it constitutes an obstacle on the path of gay love.

*The Kids* explicitly addresses the figure of a lesbian outlaw as iconic only to deconstruct it. The film unfolds along the lines of the same narrative convention that produced the outlaw: the quiet life of a suburban couple gets disrupted by the stranger who enters their lives – first as a friend, then as a threat. However, the film reverses the roles in a clever twist: the suburban couple is now a lesbian couple and the outsider – the destroyer of love – is now a man. Paul – the sperm donor and the biological father of both children – is brought into the family by Laser, the "moms'" teenage son who decides to track his biological father down as part of his teenage rebel-

lion against his parents. Paul is coded as a stereotypically butch lesbian (through references decipherable by the subcultural, but not mainstream viewers) and acts as an agent of desire (Ivanchikova). Like the lesbian outlaw, Paul disregards the social norm that prohibits adultery and enters an affair with Jules. Because the role of the queer outlaw – the protagonist that played such a significant role in the making of lesbian indie cinema – is now played by a heterosexual man, the plot appears both scandalous (transgressive) and retrograde (in its ostensible return to heterosexuality) to the lesbian audience (see, for instance, Halberstam, “The Kids are Not Ok!”).

However, there is nothing scandalous or retrograde about this plot. Contemporary queer theory maintains that queerness is not an identity – it is more of a function that works as a disruption of heteronormativity. In a quasi-Lacanian fashion, we can express it as a formula:

$$Q = \textit{negation (heteronormativity)}.$$

*The Kids* made obvious that if queerness is a function of disruption within a narrative, a straight person can perform this function under the right circumstances. While the lesbian outlaw narrative can be described as Q (lesbian) = negation of the Law (heterosexual marriage), in *The Kids* the act of queering is performed by a heterosexual man and can be described as: Q (heterosexual male) = negation of the Law (lesbian marriage).

To dispel forthcoming objections, I would like to stress that Jules’ intense sexual attraction to Paul is presented as a “queer attraction” as opposed to a heterosexual romance. Jules is drawn to Paul because of his queer qualities: his almost boyish rebelliousness, his disregard for conventions, and his overt unapologetic sexuality. A college dropout, Paul describes himself as someone who is unable to deal with authority. His lifestyle is an example of what Halberstam describes as “queer temporality” – “life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing” (*In a Queer Time and Place*, 2). Jules is not attracted to his straight masculinity and the promise of heterosexuality a relationship with a man offers. Her attraction to Paul evaporates when, in a phone conversation, he confesses the desire to create a “normal” family with Jules and the children. In a moment of comical relief, Jules exclaims: “I’m gay!” and hangs up the phone. Paul’s nascent het-

eronormative desires (for a family, stability, status) serve to reaffirm (or perhaps revive) Jules' queer identity and also push Jules back into her marriage.

By making a heterosexual man fill the role of the iconic queer outlaw, the film problematized and complicated the existing narrative convention, exposed this role's constructed nature, and thus opened it up for redefinition. The figure of the home wrecker, although alluring at first, is no longer seen as heroic. Deemed an interloper, Paul is expelled, and his transgression condemned. The family, although shaken to its core by Jules' infidelity, survives nevertheless, trust is restored, and things seem to be ok again. The outlaw, whose sex appeal is recognized, is no longer celebrated. The iconic image that served as a shortcut of a narrative convention is evoked only to be unseated.

The family, especially the one based on blood ties, which in the tradition of lesbian indie cinema has been coded as strictly heterosexual, is no longer such a thing. The film rewrites the lesbian family as the site of normalcy, sentimentality, routine, and domesticity. Not immune to transgression, it is designed to survive the attack. The film tries to work out a new relationship with the norm – it does not completely embrace the normative but tests its limits, plasticity, pliability, and the capacity to accommodate alternative sexuality and kinship.

As Cholodny demonstrated in regard to women's writing, narrative conventions embody relations of power reified in the society at large. A narrative in which a lesbian is featured as a spinster who functions as the force of negativity endlessly challenging heterosexual lifestyle, loveless marriages and stifling domesticity, corresponds to the social status of lesbians and gay men as outside the law. Unable to have families of their own, they are destined to be the – either demonic or heroic – destroyers of heterosexual families. As power relations change, the conventions within the subcultural tradition are bound to change as well. When gays and lesbians are no longer excluded from the norm, the norm itself has to show plasticity and change in order to accommodate new lifestyles. Cholodenko's film makes an effort to redefine the narrative of transgression by mocking it, flipping it on its head, and thus exposes its constructed nature and versatility, but also makes obvious its limitations.

### **Flirting with the Law: *Lip Service* (2010)**

Commissioned by BBC3 Channel, *Lip Service* – the first season of a miniseries created by Harriet Braun – provides an even better, more vivid example of the subculture's changing relationship with the normative. Broadcast in the UK in the Fall of 2010 and disseminated worldwide by its fans via youtube, the show quickly became one of the most successful and most widely discussed events of the year. *Lip Service* takes place in Glasgow and is a gritty, funny, entertaining British drama that focuses on the lives of a group of young lesbian women. Harriet Braun claims subcultural authenticity (she states that she wants to create an authentic representation of lesbian sexuality), and rather than adapting to mainstream conventions, seeks to universalize subcultural styles. The reviewers of *Lip Service* drew comparison with *The L Word* series produced in the United States; however, the show departs from its American prototype in a number of ways.

The appeal of the new series is that it is driven by characters rather than by a political agenda. The main characters of the show struggle with a variety of issues, such as trying to get their careers started, negotiating friendship and love, surviving a breakup, or starting a new relationship. One matter that they do not struggle with is being gay – homosexuality is never addressed as a political issue and is simply a fact of life for these characters. The central storyline follows Cat (Laura Fraser) who tries to get her life back together after having her heart broken by her ex-girlfriend Frankie (Ruta Gedmintas) – an angst-driven charismatic photographer. Just as Cat seems to have recovered enough emotionally to start dating again, Frankie comes back into her life to pursue her once more.

Like Paul in *The Kids*, Frankie is a citation. Glamorized by the cinematic apparatus, Frankie is visually reminiscent of Shane (an iconic character from *The L Word*) and structurally resembles the outlaw figure. Promiscuity, defiance, and disregard for conventional morality and manners situate Frankie neatly within the parameters demarcated by the transgression narrative. Although not a criminal herself, Frankie maintains proximity to the criminal world, typical of the outlaw figure. For instance, she spends the entire series trying to uncover the secret of her past only to find out that her long lost biological mother had been implicated in a murder, which lead her to abandon Frankie, and that her biological brother is a



drug dealer. Frankie's world is oversaturated with connotative markers of transgression – she has an affair with a thief, helps cover up a drug overdose, almost commits suicide, and almost gets arrested for breaking in. She also functions as “the destroyer of the couple” as she manages to jeopardize two relationships during the course of the show.

It seems that by making Frankie a central character, writer Harriet Braun expected to capitalize on the proven success of the transgression narrative in queer cinema. She warned Ruta Gedmintas (the heterosexual actress who plays Frankie) that she was destined to become a lesbian icon after the show aired (Gedmintas). It also can be argued that Braun attempted to create an icon via citation. After all, as Roland Barthes put it, beauty “cannot assert itself save in a form of a citation” (33). However, clichés employed in the creation of Frankie's character have been detected and criticized liberally by almost every reviewer and by the show's target audience. Frankie's lack of rapport with the audience is intriguing because it seems to have been unexpected. Despite the show's visual glamorization of Frankie, the audience strongly preferred Cat's new date, Sam Murray (Heather Peace). Actress Heather Peace (a lesbian in real life) who plays Sam was instantly catapulted into fame as she found herself becoming a major lesbian icon. Peace found this position of stardom highly contradictory and struggled with the idea, from initial denial (“If Ruta was gay, I don't think anyone would be paying me any attention at all” [*Cass-Maran*]) to eventual recognition and astonishment:

“[t]he reaction to Sam has been a complete shock. ... I really did think it was quite a minor role and I didn't realize there would be a reaction to Sam that has been.” (*This is Me – At Home*).

Sam figures as a harbinger of an emergent plot structure in which the law is no longer seen as a heterosexual prerogative. Sam Murray is a police officer, a D.S. (detective sergeant), who really loves her job and represents, literally embodies the law. Although never in uniform, D.S. Sam Murray conveys an aura of authority, psychological maturity, and calm confidence. An openly lesbian police officer, respected by her peers, she seems to be able to stand by what

is right while having the law on her side. Cat meets Sam through an online dating site, and their first date is a disaster. Nervous Cat makes a complete fool out of herself by spouting stereotypes about police officers during their first date. Among other things, she says: "Most people think police are power-hungry homophobes who get their kicks beating up suspects. Well, obviously I don't think that, and clearly you are not like that." The show thus consciously deploys and interrogates stereotypical ideas about the police and the law. The characters frequently refer to Sam as "the cop" and try to work out their own attitudes to law enforcement:

Becky: Cat's on a blind date with the cop.

Frankie: Wouldn't have thought cop was Cat's thing.

Becky: Well, she is a gay cop. She is hardly going to be some bat-wielding thug, is she?

Frankie: So what, if you are gay it makes it right on, does it? (Frankie storms out.)

The question of whether Sam is indeed a "thug" or "right on" is vital because of the way the law and its representatives have been previously coded in lesbian cinema. The police station (Sam's workplace) is featured as a space where Cat's (and the viewer's) preconceived notions about law enforcement are teased out and redefined. Instead of figuring as a site of homophobia and oppression, it is presented as a queer space in which the viewer is invited to, literally, flirt with the law. In the scene that has acquired an iconic quality, Cat is brought into Sam's police station when she becomes a victim of mugging. Expecting to be treated heartlessly by "power-hungry homophobes" and "bat-wielding thugs," Cat is defensive and nervous. However, as Sam comes to her rescue, the police station is reoriented and inscribed as a fascinating site of lesbian desire. During a snappy exchange in which flirtation and interrogation are indistinguishable, Cat succumbs to the lure of the law and Sam asks her out on a second date. The film returns to the theme of the police station as a queer space by featuring a steamy lesbian sex scene in Sam's office (Episode 3). Importantly, Sam's lesbian identity is not an issue in her career; she introduces Cat to her co-workers as her "other half" and seeks relationship advice from her friends – male police officers at the station. Their relationship

is thus neither illicit nor surreptitious – it does not achieve its appeal through transgression.

In *Lip Service*, the Law intensifies desire (positively) through seduction rather than defining it negatively through interdiction. While preceding lesbian cinema argued with the law (military, family institution, police, government), *Lip Service* flirts with the law, sexualizes it, and invites the viewer to imagine a new relationship with the normative through the figure of Sam and Cat's relationship with Sam. The audience is encouraged to follow Cat who not only flirts with the law, but then goes on a date with the law (so to speak), has sex with the law, and ponders whether she should marry the law as well.

It is intriguing that the show's creator Harriet Braun was not sure whether this plot line was going to be successful. In an interview released in the "Extras" section of the DVD, she expresses a hope that the audience would be cheering for Cat and Frankie. She then adds rather shyly: but "maybe, I don't know, they will also be rooting for Cat and Sam." When asked whether she expected how popular Sam (and Heather Peace who played her) would become, Braun says:

I really hoped people would like Sam as much as I did when I was writing her. I think we were also very lucky to have Heather Peace, who blew us away in her audition and has given such a fantastic performance. That said I think it was impossible for anyone to predict that Sam would become a bit of a dykon! ("Q & A")

Yet the audience's response to Sam verged on collective hysteria. Despite being a supporting rather than a lead character, Sam became the most widely discussed figure by both reviews and fans. The following excerpt from a review is representative of how the character was perceived within the subculture. Dorothy Snarker, the author of a blog titled *A Gay Gal's Guide to Popular Culture*, writes:

So when this whole "[Lip Service](#)" business started everyone assumed Frankie's Ruta Gedmintas would be the show's resident lesbothrob. She was the "Shane" of the group (yes, yes – I know she's *not* Shane). She did all the

moody looking through her hair and randy dropping of her skinny jeans. She was the bad girl. But a funny thing happened on the way to fandom, everyone started swooning over the good girl instead. Sure, we still love us some Frankie. But bring up Detective Sergeant Sam Murray to a group of gay ladies and you'll hear a chorus of, "Ooooooh, the hot cop." Yes, hot cop is hot – and ridiculously so.

Snarker's entry is representative as she notices and critiques the convention involved in the creation of the "bad girl" (Frankie) while recognizing and welcoming the energizing novelty of the "good girl" plot. In the age of Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, and other social media, fan cultures can respond to the show in real time and make a real impact on the way it is perceived by other viewers. From the outset, it became clear that the audience refused to iconize Frankie who was glamorized by the cinematic apparatus. Instead, the fans engaged their own cultural apparatus in making Sam's image iconic (through Twitter and Facebook messages, collages and fan videos, fan fiction and cultural commentary). Here is an example of a Twitter board with fans commenting on the show in real time:

- DS Sam...hotter than The L Word cast, hotter than the surface of the sun, hotter than the inside of a toasted pitta bread
- DS Murry \*swoon\*
- If Cat chooses Frankie over amazing-perfect Sam, I am boycotting the show
- Sam is so f\*\*\*ing swoon-worthy. She is literally the perfect gf. Also, every show should start with her naked
- Frankie sizing up DSSam, gurl you plz you got nothing on Sam! (Quoted by Hal)

The audience's response to the series revealed that viewers are not historically naïve or innocent; in fact, they suture their own desire onto an image, producing it as a focal point of their collective fantasies. The audience recognized narrative conventions at work as well as the cinematic apparatus that was supporting these conventions (which makes a salient point that the audience is never passively constructed by these mechanisms). Spectatorship is productive of meaning, and in the age of social media, becomes a potent

co-creator of meaning. As Mayne points out, “spectators respond to films in ways that may well be unauthorized, but nonetheless [are] meaningful, in terms other than those prescribed by the institutions of narrative cinema” (28).

*Lip Service* represents a turning point in narrative conventions that I call “queering the law.” The experimental quality of what Braun was doing is visible throughout the show as the narrative of transgression competes with the new narrative structure. The two provide a tension that the show was never quite able to resolve. The last episode of the series features Cat’s transgression as she jeopardizes her relationship with Sam by sleeping with Frankie. Frankie’s role as the agent of desire and thus as a threat to the couple references the lesbian outlaw convention but fails to achieve an iconic status in the show as it competes with the new narrative structure in which the couple she is seeking to destroy is a lesbian couple and the law that she antagonizes is no longer seen as bad (homophobic, corrupt, etc). The end of the show is thus highly intriguing as Cat is left pondering whether she should be with Frankie (the outlaw) or stay with Sam (the law). Just as in *The Kids*, the outlaw’s sex appeal is explicitly acknowledged, but her transgression is no longer celebrated.

The ambiguous ending agitated the audience of the show. Fearful that the structural demands of the “transgression convention” would make Braun write Sam off the series, the audience launched a campaign producing “Team Sam” t-shirts and accessories, turning actress Heather Peace into “the most famous lesbian in Great Britain” (Peace, *BirdBox* 2). Responding to the audience’s anxiety over Sam’s role in the next season of the show, Braun promised that there would be “a lot more of D.S. Murray” in the second season (“The GreatLezBritain Party”). The audiences’ response illustrated that the subculture has grown weary of the outlaw character and is actively looking for alternatives. It also revealed the possibility of reconfiguring the relationship with the normative or the law through characters that embody the law’s positive characteristics.

Flirting with the law is risky business because the subculture still maintains an ambivalent relationship with the normative. The concern that, in its encounter with the law, queer difference might be swallowed or co-opted is legitimate. Yet, it seems that the old plots that code the law as corrupt and transgression as necessary and positive do not have the same magical appeal they used to. Can we

possibly work out something we can call queernormative – not in the sense of normalizing the queer or making concessions to the law but in the sense of queering the law itself? When the law becomes queer, this new face of the law may not be that unattractive. Both *The Kids* and *Lip Service* destabilize the opposition between normativity and queerness, exploring the “queernormative,” or better queerness that is no longer positioned strictly outside of the normative, not in the same way it used to be. The relationship between normative and queer becomes more complicated and presents new possibilities for writers who wish to explore the possibilities and the limits of queering the law. *Lip Service* exposed the queer law-breaker figure as outmoded and presented us with a new iconic image, creating a new alphabet of affects for a new set of social conditions. This signaled the dissolution of a certain narrative convention and our readiness for new stories where we are allowed to flirt with the law and enjoy it too.

### Notes

- 1 See, for example, Coffman’s analysis of the Papin affair.
- 2 Examples featuring this story line include, among many others: *When Night is Falling* (1995), *High Art* (1998), *Aimee and Jaguar* (1999), *Bad Girls Seasons 1-3* (1999-2001), *A Woman’s Love* (2004), *The L Word Season 1* (2004), *Between Two Women* (2004), *Elena Undone* (2004), *I Can’t Think Straight* (2007), *The World Unseen* (2008), *The Sea Purple* (2009), *Eloise* (2010).

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## En grænse for transgressionen?

Jakob Ejersbos Nordkraft

*Mikkel Jensen*

*er cand. mag. i Engelsk og Historie fra AAU og arbejder som gymnasielærer.*

Med stor kritisk og populær succes står Jakob Ejersbos romandebut Nordkraft (2002) i dag 10 år efter dens første udgivelse stadig som en af de større danske succeshistorier i dansk litteratur efter årtusindskiftet. Romanens beskrivelse af et stofmiljø i Aalborg i starten af 1990erne introducerede mange læsere til et nyt og ukendt miljø, der samtidig udgjorde baggrunden for Ejersbos skildring af et tema om grænseudforskning- og overskridelse, der var af et mere alment tilsnit end den journalistiske miljøskildring. Igennem denne dobbelthed ses romanens måde at udtrykke den realistiske litteraturs dobbelthed på, i det den insisterer på at referere til en tekst-ekstern virkelighed samtidig med, at den indarbejder relativt subtile pointer, moraler og synsvinkler på sagerne "som de er".

Den nævnte grænse- eller transgressionstematik bliver især portrætteret gennem den karismatiske Steso, der er omdrejningspunktet for den sidste del i romanens tredelte struktur. Det, der især er interessant ved Steso, er, at man kan se en meget ambivalent skildring af hans liv og valg, der både portrætteres medfølende og ganske kritisk på samme tid. Den kritiske vinkel på Steso ses i det, at når læseren møder ham, har Steso levet i sit grænseoverskridende trip i lang tid, hvilket har gjort, at han er kommet til at køre i de samme baner igen og igen. Her mener jeg at kunne påpege, at når Stesos ellers transgressive adfærd blot får karakter af gentagelse,

sker der det, at transgressionen ret beset ikke er transgression mere, men blot reproduktion af tidligere adfærd. At transgressere er at overskride grænser (egne eller andres), og hvis man blot overskriver den samme grænse igen og igen er dette ikke overskride grænser for en selv mere. Så Steso synes at fremstå som en ellers velflekteret person, der er kørt fast i en rille.

I romanens to første dele (Junkiehunde og Broen) følger vi henholdsvis Maria, der er kæreste med den lidt mislykkede pusher Asger, og Allan, der er vendt hjem til Aalborg efter i flere år at have været ude og sejle for at komme på afstand af sin hjemstavns hårde miljø. Begge bevæger sig i periferien af stofmiljøet, idet de enten prøver at undslippe det eller primært er der på grund af en kæreste. Karaktererne i romanen har generelt det tilfælles, at de forholder sig meget kritisk til det miljø, de er vokset op i, og derfor søger de noget andet (stofferne), som dog heller ikke nødvendigvis viser sig at være det, de søger. Dette er dog ikke skildret som en eskapisme, i det romanen ikke reducerer karaktererne til symptomer af deres barndom, men i stedet skildrer deres valg, fravalg, fiaskoer og succeser i en respektfuld øjenhøjde. Historien om Allan slutter, da han ad store omveje er ved at starte et forhold til Maja, der absolut ikke vil have noget med stofmiljøet at gøre, og Marias del ender med, at hun starter et forhold til lånehajen Hussein.

Karakterne er således søgende og i denne søgen går de til og fra forskellige miljøer (forstadsmiddelklasse, stofmiljø), som de aldrig bliver i, men må søge videre fra. Som sådan repræsenterer Allan og Maria en kontinuerlig grænseoverskridelse. Anderledes forholder det sig med bogens tredje hovedperson Steso, og man kan sige, at det lige præcis er ham, der mest udtalt illustrerer Nordkrafts forhold til det transgressive. I Stesos del – Begravelse – mødes mange af bogens karakterer til afskeden med deres gamle ven Steso, der sættes i jorden ved Sønderholm Kirke nær ved Aalborg i 1994. De samlede tager bestik af deres ungdom, og snakker om, hvad det var, de lavede i Aalborg dengang.

Noget af det interessante ved Steso er, at han repræsenterer det transgressive på flere måder. Et er at man kan tale om, at hans adfærd er socialt transgressiv, forstået på den måde at han overskrider sociale normer, er konfrontativ og måske opfattes som en noget grænseoverskridende karakter af både romanens andre karakterer såvel som romanens læsere. Dertil er der også et element

af selv-transgression, idet at Steso prøver at "udvide sin bevidsthed" gennem stoffer samt gennem læsning af skønlitteratur og filosofi. På eksistentialetistisk vis kan man sige, at der i en selv-transgression er en bevægelse fra det at være til det at blive. Igennem et menneskes opvækst bliver det til det menneske som det så gerne er i resten af dets liv. Folk, der har gennemgået denne proces, er – hvorimod mennesket, der bliver eksistentialetist, vender tilbage til igen at blive, hvilket betyder at denne udviklingsproces vendes om og sættes i gang igen. Dette menneske er altså først gået fra at blive til at være for siden at vende udviklingen igen fra allerede at være til igen at blive. Dette er det selv-transgressive: at overskride at være til igen at blive. For at noget er, må det være karakteriseret ved at være noget, hvilket betyder, at der er noget det ikke er. Dette betyder, at en væren har en grænse og det er denne grænse for væren, der er mulig at overskride – hvilket Steso så undlader, idet hans selv-transgression – som nævnt – ikke er transgressiv, da han ikke krydser nye grænser, som han ikke allerede har overskredet til ukendelighed.

I denne forstand bliver stofferne, som Steso tager, en metafor for det grænseoverskridende, og de kommer således til at stå som en indgang for læseren i dennes forsøg på at forstå Stesos valg om at leve så tæt på stedet, hvor filmen risikerer at knække nært sagt når som helst. Det er den, der søger grænsen, der lærer grænsen at kende, og så er det lige præcis dér, vi kan undersøge, hvad grænsen og transgressionen betyder i Nordkraft. Romanens andre to hovedpersoner, Maria og Allan, har hver (haft) deres periode med stofferne, men prøver derefter at komme ud af det, hvilket står i kontrast til Stesos ubetingede omfavelse af den insisterende overskridelse af sociale normer; han ønsker og prøver hårdnakket at omgå den såkaldte "banale fase", som er hans betegnelse for det, at man "starter med at tro, at man er noget helt særligt. Et specielt menneske; dybere og mere åndfuld og indsigtfuld end andre", men at man til sidst ender med at droppe disse "naive illusioner" (Ejersbo, 2002: 396). Derfor er det interessant, at det lige præcis er Steso, der helhjertet forsøger at favne det transgressive, som går hen og dør af stofferne. Dette kunne umiddelbart ligne en morale i Nordkraft, om at hans adfærd grundlæggende ikke kan accepteres, og at den derfor må gå under. Det er denne implicitte stillingstagen til det transgressive, som er interessen her.

## Steso

I det transgressive og selv-transgressive er der konsekvent en bevægelse hen mod og over en grænse, men i denne optik er der noget grundlæggende paradoksalt ved Steso. Han prøver konstant at udvide sin bevidsthed og derigennem sig selv. Denne tanke kender vi fra adjektivet/ adverbiet psykedelisk, der er dannet af de græske begreber for sind eller sjæl (psyche) og udvidelse (delos) (Escohotado, 1999: 115). Men trods dette udvikles hans bevidsthed ikke videre, end hvor den allerede er – hans syn på livet lader ikke til at udvide sig, han ændrer sig ikke, han når ikke til nye erkendelser, han søger ikke ud af miljøet.

Antonymet for transgressionen må være det konforme; det som holder sig inden for grænserne og som modificerer sig selv til dette formål. Og denne konformitet kan Steso altså ikke fordrage – det er den livsindstilling, han har bevæget sig væk fra, og som han afviser. Men transgressionen for Steso fungerer kun som en (a)social transgression i forhold til andre menneskers idéer og den baggrund, han kommer fra. Steso opfører sig flere gange ganske konfrontatorisk overfor mennesker udenfor hans nærmeste omgangskreds, og står som sådan i opposition til disse mennesker. Han overskrider måske deres grænser men ikke sine egne, og Stesos transgression bliver således afhængig af forhold, der ligger uden for hans egen person, hvilket så bliver udgangspunktet for hans tænkning om livet og sig selv. Denne afvisning af det konforme, som kunne have været et produktivt udgangspunkt for Stesos udvikling, er også gået hen og blevet hans slutstation – han er kørt fast i sin tænkning ligesom han er i sine stoffer. Dette er Stesos tragedie. Han må og skal tage udgangspunkt i sig selv i transgressionens rejse – hans egne grænser er de grænser, der burde være interessante at overskride. Umiddelbart kunne dette lyde, som om at Ejersbos budskab er udpræget moraliserende – men det er det ikke, idet han ikke advokerer, hvor karakterer bør gå hen – blot at de bør gå videre fra, hvor de selv er – altså selv-transgression. Stofferne hænger unægtelig sammen med både hans liv og død, og Steso har sit eget syn på, hvad han vil med sit liv:

”Det drejer sig udelukkende om at prøve alt det man ønsker sig inden man kreperer.”

”Og hvad er det så, du mangler at prøve Steso?” spørger [Maria] med et fnis.

”Jamen, for satan, Maria,” siger han, pludselig begejstret, ”jeg skal sgu da være her om 20-30-40 år, når kemikerne kommer op med noget helt FANTASTISK dope, som jeg kan muntre mig med.” Steso står med et vellystigt lidt forlegent grin. (Ejersbo, 2002: 75)

Det særegne ved Stesos syn på livet er, at det ikke handler om at blive, gøre eller være noget – men kun at ”prøve alt det man ønsker sig”. Han vil prøve kræfter med en hel masse (stoffer) men er ikke i stand til at vælge at gå helhjertet ind i andet end en strøm af nye bekendtskaber med stoffer, han kan muntre sig med. Hans mest bindende valg og hengivelse er til den Stesolid, han har sit øgenavn efter og til barndomskæresten Tilde, som han ikke kan få det til at fungere sammen med, hvilket illustrerer Stesos forhold til sig selv. Afprøvningen lader til at være det eneste konstante for ham, og således har hans måde at være på udviklet sig på en sådan måde, at han er holdt op med at udvikle sig. Han er, hvor han er, og denne identitet bliver altså ikke udviklet – Stesos liv, eksperimenterende stoffer eller ej, er grundlæggende blot mere af det samme igen og igen. De sanseudvidende stoffer udvider på tragisk vis ikke længere Stesos horisonter, men er blevet til hans horisont. Og som nævnt er det psykedeliske således ikke til stede i Stesos stof(mis)brug i ordets oprindelige, positive forstand. På denne måde kan man sige, at Steso sidder fast, og at den transgression, han forsøger at udøve, grundlæggende er uproduktiv. Men i kraft af at Steso personificerer (på to måder husker vi: selv-transgression og en socialt situeret transgression overfor sociale normer) transgressionen så intenst i romanen, er det sigende, at det er hans adfærd, der sættes en endelig grænse for i romanen.

Som sagt kunne en overfladisk analyse af Stesos død sige, at romanen fordømmer det transgressive, men jeg mener, at det vil være mere præcist at sige, at Ejersbo blot afviser Stesos måde at håndtere det transgressive på, og det hænger sammen med, at der ikke sættes lighedstegn mellem personen, transgressionen og stofferne. Grundlæggende kan man sige at det at indtage psykofarmaka enten kan beskrives som stofbrug eller stofmisbrug. Denne sondring er vigtig at drage ift. Nordkraft, fordi den lader os diskutere om brugen af stoffer er aktiv (brug) eller passiv (misbrug), hvor misbruget er karakteriseret ved at stofferne har taget magten

over personen, hvorimod der ved stofbrug er et subjekt, der aktivt opsøger stoffer. Jeg mener, at man med en vis ret kan læse Nordkraft, uden at det stof(mis)brugende kommer til at være det centrale ved Steso, selvom det var den narkorelaterede miljøskildring, bogen i en vis grad blev kendt for. For det lader til, at Ejersbo har et mere åbent forhold til, om brugen af stoffer bør kategoriseres som misbrug i det, at bogen ikke indeholder deciderede moraliseringer over brugen af stoffer – kun en påmindelse om den uafrystelige sorg, der ligger i Steso-Thomas' tidlige død. Og lige præcis mht. Steso udfordrer Ejersbo distinktionen stofbrug/stofmisbrug, i det at Steso tager så mange stoffer, at man må antage, at han er fysisk afhængig samtidig med at han bruger stofferne så entusiastisk. Dog antydes det, at den udvikling som Steso har gennemgået dog er karakteriseret ved, at han er gået fra at være en aktiv stofbruger til afhængig misbruger. Dette ses fx i en scene, hvor han slikker sine fingre rene for at få det sidste våde stesolid med, efter at hans piller er blevet våde (Ejersbo, 2002: 350).

Det er altså hverken en romantisering eller en moralisering af Stesos stofbrug, vi har med at gøre her, hvilket synes at blive afspejlet i romanens journalistisk registrerende skrivestil: der udvises en sympati for karakteren, samtidig med, at det illustreres, hvor galt det kan gå med et så intenst stofforbrug, som Steso har. At Steso hopper så meget i med begge ben, slår ham til sidst ihjel, og som jeg læser slutningen, er det ment som en sørgelig slutning, der trods Stesos usympatiske sider og romanens kritik af hans valg, sørger over hans tidlige død. Romanen udviser altså en grundlæggende ambivalens eller fravalg af moralisering over Stesos død, hvilket man kan se i de forskellige måder hans død kan tolkes på. Det kommer vi tilbage til.

Stesos valg i livet bliver læseren præsenteret for med respekt: Han bliver ikke reduceret til noget sociologisk eller psykologisk modsvar til forældregenerationens forstadsliv eller konformitet, om man vil. Hans valg bliver portrætteret med respekt som et fuldt menneske – og vi møder Steso i hans tanker og gøren – ikke som et symptom på bagvedliggende årsager, hvilket Søren Schou også har pointeret ganske godt:

Det mest imponerende ved romanen er for mig at se, at den portrætterer sine mange stofmisbrugere som individer og i fuld legemsstørrelse; imponerende, fordi misbrugere – det være sig alkoholikere



eller narkomaner – ifølge den gængse opfattelse er mennesker, der efterhånden reduceres til at ligne hinanden: Når al energi samles om jagten på næste fix, går personligheden fløjten. ... Men han har held til at overbevise læseren om, hvor forskelligartede de er. Selv en figur som "Steso", hvis misbrug er enormt, er fuld af genialske indfald, indtil han bukker under og følges til graven af sine kammerater i romanens sidste del. (Schou, 2004: 91)

Personligheden og dermed individualiteten går lige præcis ikke fløjten, som Schou pointerer – dog har Steso alligevel tabt noget: Hans venners tillid og transgressionens potentiale – begge dele bliver forspildt i stofferne. Efter at have stjålet fra sine venner og misbrugt deres tillid, kom de til at se ham anderledes. Så selvom han stadig skiller sig ud fra mængden, er det alligevel stofbrugeren Steso og ikke personen Thomas, hans omgangskreds er i kontakt med, hvilket understreges ved, at han lige netop ikke bliver kaldt ved sit barndomsnavn Thomas, men ved kæle/øgenavnet Steso. Og hans adfærd overskrider ofte andre folks grænser – og i denne asociale transgression fremstår han usympatisk i nogle af sine venners minder:

"Han var sgu en god fyr," siger Svend.

"Han var sgu da også ond. Han var altid ... så led ved folk," siger Michael og kigger lidt trodsigt over på Svend.

Lars nikker: "Ja, han var næsten altid ondsindet." (Ejersbo, 2002: 396)

Denne meningsudveksling understreger det individuelle i kollektivromanen – mange karakterer står stærkt trukket op i bogen, og som individer kommer de hver til deres ret. Dialogen understreger, hvor forskelligt folk opfattede Steso og med hvor stor overbærenhed, de så ham; den grænseoverskridende opførsel Steso havde, kommer endda til at stå for Lars som overlagt (ondsindet). Flere steder i romanen nærmer Stesos adfærd sig endda galskab – i hvert fald for nogle af de andre karakterer – og i denne forståelse relaterer Nordkraft sig til den amerikanske Beat litteratur, der eksplicit refereres til i bogen, og som skildrede galskab som en "strategy for misfits to transgress the boundaries of conformity, set up by society's dominant culture" (Sørensen, 2006: 1). Der er også en anti-konformitet at finde i nogle af Nordkrafts karakterer – men

det er ikke over for en "dominant culture", der underkuer dem, men overfor en forældregeneration, hvis levevis ikke har vist sig attraktiv at følge i sporene på.

### Stofferne

I bogens første del "Junkiehunde" har pusheren Asger (Marias kæreste) lånt to kendte Beat romaner – On The Road af Jack Kerouac og Naked Lunch af William Burroughs – af en kunde, der er skolelærer; de får dog lov til at samle støv i en vindueskarm, selvom Asger gerne vil foregive at have læst dem (Ejersbo, 2002: 74 – 75). Steso, der er på besøg for at købe stoffer, tvivler dog på, at Asger virkelig skulle have læst Burroughs eksperimenterende Naked Lunch:

Steso løfter Nøgen frokost op i luften. "Prøver du at fortælle mig, at du virkelig har læst den?"

"Ja, for fanden. Samfundet er bange for stofkulturen, fordi stofferne gør os i stand til at gennemskue samfundets meningsløshed og giver os en dybere indsigt." Selvom det er Store-Carstens sætning, så er det samtidig det længste sammenhængende udsagn jeg nogensinde har hørt Asger udtale. (Ejersbo, 2002: 75)

Fortælleren Maria piller hurtigt sin kærestes udsagn ned, men især set i bakspejlet virker det komisk for læseren, at Asger, der ender med at slå sine hunde ihjel, fordi de afspejler hans egen afhængighed, mener at stoffer kan give ham en større indsigt i noget som helst. Denne lille hyldest til de gamle Beat-mænd er selvfølgelig ikke uden betydning for bogens selvforståelse og Ejersbo kritiserer således romantiseringen af "bevidsthedsudvidende stoffer" (det psykedeliske potentiale) og lader til at være enig med Steso, når han svarer at "Jeg tror sgu ikke samfundet er bange for dit pap-tjald". I denne forstand går romanen imod den tendens, der kan være til at anskue stoffer som et potent symbol for det transgressive. Denne romantisering af stofbrug og især stofmisbrug prøver Ejersbo at punktere. Som vi så tidligere, prøvede Søren Schou at placere romanen i dens æstetiske kontekst (realismen og dennes funktion & kollektivromanen), men jeg mener også i høj grad, at det er vigtigt at forstå Nordkraft i dén kulturelle kontekst, der omhandler skildringen af stoffer.

Meget litteratur- og musikkultur portrætterer og anser stoffer som psykedeliske, og stoffer bliver gerne hyldet i forbindelse med denne egenskab. Som litterært symbol indeholder stoffer på denne måde ofte en dobbeltsidighed: på den ene side repræsenterer de et brud med sociale normer og en udvidelse af sindet, men på den anden side er der risikoen for, at de får brugeren til at stivne i en passiv og sørgelig afhængighed – misbrugeren kommer kort sagt aldrig videre i livet og denne ambivalens er den samme man ser hos Steso. På denne måde er der både en fordømmende eller idealiserende måde at skildre stoffer på, men som sagt ønsker romanen ikke at gøre hverken det ene eller andet. Men ved at hive fat i den reference til Beatlitteraturen giver Nordkraft en indikation om, hvordan vi kan forstå dens forhold til det at fremstille stofproblematikken i litteratur – det sker så at sige i en dialog med måden Beat-forfatterne tidligere gjorde det på.

I hvert fald noget af Beat-litteraturen udviser en både intellektuel interesse i stoffernes psykedeliske potentiale samtidig med, at der også er et element af grænseoverskridende hedonisme. I denne litteratur var der igennem det transgressive næsten altid et samfundskritisk element til stede; der var en form for intellektuel refleksion over det at tage stoffer. I kontrast til denne praksis står så karaktererne i Nordkraft, der ikke gør dette – der er selvfølgelig den højt intelligente Steso, men selv hans stofbrug er ikke reflekteret længere. Med denne lille intertekstuelle reference prøver Ejersbo således at understrege, at Nordkrafts skildring af stoffer ikke tillægger dem det samme potentiale. Dette er dog ikke det samme som at sige, at romanen blot skildrer viljesløse narkomaner – Schou pointerer jo, at karaktererne netop ikke bliver reduceret til deres stofbrug. Det, som karaktererne er i stand til, antyder bogen, kommer netop ikke fra stofferne, men fra dem selv. Og selv om stofferne skildres hverken fordømmende eller uromantiserende, kommer karakterernes betragtelige styrke og udvikling i den sidste ende fra dem selv – stofferne hjælper dem ikke på vej med noget som helst.

Et grundlæggende fortolkningsmæssigt punkt er således, om Stesos tilværelse med stofferne er et udtryk for ham selv og hans vilje, der aktivt og kontinuerligt fastholder sig selv i denne position, eller om stofferne også selv er blevet en selvstændig aktiv del i hans valg; er Steso underlagt stoffernes magt? Problemstillingen ligger i,

om stofferne skal ses som aktivt deltagende i at fastholde ham i hans livsførelse, og om det Steso så laver, mere er et udtryk for en passiv accept af det valg at tage stoffer, han tidligere ganske bevidst har foretaget. Dette, mener jeg, i høj grad står som et i princippet uafgørligt spørgsmål for læseren at bestemme sig for. Mere sikkert kan det siges, at det under alle omstændigheder er en transgression, der bliver uproduktiv, i og med at Steso ikke når videre. Hans adfærd skal være så grænseoverskridende – men han overtræder ikke nogen grænse, han ikke allerede har overskredet til døde, hvilket gør at den "grænse" der overskrider ikke rette overhovedet kan siges at være en grænse mere. Dette gør Stesos "transgression" til en ikke-overskridende transgression, og dette har gjort overskridelsen meningsløs og formålsløs.

### Stesos død

Som sagt skærer filmatiseringen af Nordkraft det ud i pap, at Steso begår selvmord, hvor hans død er mere tvetydigt skildret i romanen. Hvordan læseren forholder sig til dette spørgsmål – begår Steso selvmord bevidst eller er han uheldig med en overdosis? – er faktisk afgørende for en tolkning af bogen og for, hvordan man anskuer Steso. Jeg har argumenteret for, at Stesos handlen og væren er gået hen og blevet reproduktion af hans adfærd og som sådan ikke reelt set transgressiv, men i Stesos død lader romanen ham måske få noget oprejsning.

Én måde at se dette på er, at Steso her overskrider sig selv ved at begå selvmord, og at han således kommer ud af sit dødvande ved igen at bryde en grænse. Denne tolkning indeholder så to muligheder, idet dette enten kan ses som et målrettet og afklaret selvmord, han vælger fuldt bevidst, eller det kan ses som en flugt væk fra det liv, han måske skulle til at leve fremover. I romanen bliver det skildret ganske detaljeret hvordan Steso forsigtigt forbereder sig til at tage dette fix på, hvilket får hans handling til at fremstå ganske overlagt. I begge disse scenarier står Steso igen som et handlende subjekt bevidst i og om sin adfærd – mere afklaret i den første mulighed vel at mærke, idet hans valg er rettet mod noget og ikke væk fra noget andet. Dog er det også muligt at se selvmordet som en uheldig overdosis, og som sådan er det en ufrivillig død. I de to første scenarier er det et afklaret valg, som gør at man igen kan opfatte ham som et bevidst handlende men-

neske – men mindst ulykkeligt i den tolkning, der ser selvmordet som rettet mod noget og ikke som en flugt fra sit liv.

Om det er et bevidst eller utilsigtet selvmord, så er det under alle omstændigheder en meget sørgelig ende for Steso – men der er på en paradoksal vis også en sørgelig form for oprejsning i den første mulighed, idet at læseren får Steso at se som et afklaret og bevidst handlende individ. Som sådan ligger der en fortolkningsmæssig nøgle i hans død.

### Og hvad så?

Som mange gode bøger prøver Nordkraft ikke at presse en morale ned i halsen på dens læsere, men illustrerer en problemstilling, som læseren så må forholde sig til. Noget af betydningsdannelsen (fx mht. Stesos død) bliver med andre ord overladt til læseren som en åben tekst i Umberto Ecos forstand, i og med at der er flere betydningsmæssige "huller", som læseren selv er med til at fylde ud i samarbejde med teksten. Nordkraft undlader således at påtvinge læseren moraler. På bagsiden af bogens omslag – en såkaldt paratekst – står der "Nordkraft er en roman om en gruppe unge, der lever på begge sider af grænsen" (Ejersbo 2002: bagsiden). Således opfordres læseren eksplicit at forholde sig til denne tematik, der bliver portrætteret gennem de fleste af romanens karakterer, især Steso og hans problematiske forhold til stoffer, transgressionen og derigennem til sig selv.

I sidste ende er selv-transgressionen som Nordkraft hylder. Hvis den socialt normbrydende transgression kan hjælpe individet ind på denne rejse, er det er for Ejersbo fint nok, men den sociale transgression har ikke samme kraftfulde potentiale i sig, og derfor er dens transgression i sidste ende ikke lige så interessant eller afgørende. Den sociale transgression, der får alle hovedpersonerne til at søge væk fra deres for dem uattraktive opvækstmiljøer, er vigtig for dem alle – men når de har gennemført denne transgression ligger den vigtigste transgression stadig foran dem, og som sådan står den sociale transgression i Nordkraft som et forstadium for selv-transgressionen. De grænser, der til syvende og sidst er mest afgørende for individet, er dennes egne grænser, og derfor er det disse, der er mest produktive – mest eksistentielle at overskride.

Det sørgelige ved Stesos rejse i stofferne er derfor, at det er en rejse væk mod noget, der egentlig ikke findes fysisk eller metaforisk.

Og uden et mål for transgressionen bliver transgressionen træt, og bogen illustrerer på denne måde, at transgressionen ikke kan være et mål i sig selv. Budskabet (intenderet eller ej) lader til at være, at transgressionen må og skal have et mål hinsides grænsen, som den søger – en rettedhed om man vil. I den forstand kan man sige, at Nordkraft forsvarer en transgression, som drejer sig som selvoverskridelsen, og i den forstand bliver den mest positive transgression i romanen til et eksistentielistisk anliggende, og det er især i manglen på selvoverskridelse, at Nordkraft er kritisk overfor Steso. I hans liv er Stesos ikke-transgression blevet cirkulær som en hund, der jager sin egen hale og i hans død sker der det, at hans transgression-for-transgressionens-skyld ender i, at han kører ud over kanten, og transgressionens grænse nås således – en sørgelig afslutning af al transgression.<sup>1</sup>

### Noter

- 1 Der skal lyde en stor tak til Stephanie Erlenbach og Lærke Holm Dalsgaard, hvis grundige kommentarer har gjort denne artikel bedre.

Kursiver?

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## Does the Porn Star Blush?

Performing the Real in Post-transgressive Cinema

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The power of the false is delicate, allowing itself to be recaptured by frogs and scorpions.... the elements of time require an extraordinary encounter with man in order to produce something new. (Deleuze, 1989, p.147)

At the heart of pornography is sexuality haunted by its own disappearance. (Baudrillard, 1987, p. 40)

In her seminal study of porn as genre, *Hardcore: Power, Pleasure and the Frenzy of the Visible*, from 1989, Linda Williams opens her chapter on filmic perversion and obscenity with a brief and prepara-

tory digression on Andre Bazin's theory of realism, which may be understood as a substantiation of what Bazin called the 'myth of total cinema.' This 'myth' was based on a projected or intuited *telos* whose effect was to create a cinematic apparatus backwardly generating a progression towards ever greater verisimilitude to the real: the real, that is, as he put it somewhat mystically, of the world. As a number of commentators had observed prior to Bazin, (and with important consequences for adjacent arts such as painting and theatre, let alone static photography), this was a 'real' – however amorphous its denotation – that from its origins in the 1890s the moving image had promised in a way that no other expressive or representational medium in history had even begun to approach. Bazin was certainly no 'naive realist,' though, and was perfectly aware of the artifice that cinema was simultaneously capable of and differentiated accordingly between filmmakers who emphasized the image itself through its spatial and temporal connections and coordinates, such as the German expressionists or Soviet montagists, and those who rather emphasized 'reality' in its more immediately material sense, by combining, say, a long take with a certain depth of field, so to mimic the contours and textures of a projected external reality. Such figures such as Orson Welles and the Italian neo-realists, for example, exemplified this mimetic tendency for Bazin. Williams also notes here in passing an observation by the historian Stephen Marcus who claimed somewhat provocatively but aptly that cinema was what the genre of pornography "was waiting for all along", since language in literary pornography had always been a "bothersome necessity." (Williams, 1999, p. 185)

Marcus represents a general perception of and perspective on the screening of sex which has tended to reappear in much of the critical literature on porn, whether positive or negative, from its earliest days to more recent commentary on the vogue for supposedly authentic sexual depiction in film, a vogue which has since the 1990s colonized so much of the moving image both within and beyond the genre as such. Necessarily, of course, such colonization has a prehistory, and it is a prehistory that has everything to do with the coalescence of a certain and important vision of temporality with notions of authenticity that began to appear in the 1970s. Tanya Krzywinska, for example, cites and discusses Joan Mellen's comments on *Last Tango in Paris*, noting that it:

...is an open essay on the realities, emotional highs and lows of a sexual relationship, and focuses on what Bernardo Bertolucci, the director, has called 'the present of fucking; (cited in Mellen 1974, 79). The intention to capture the suspension of time in the act of sex operates, as Joan Mellen says, as 'a pure cinematic moment of authenticity beside which every other experience in the film is derivative' (1974, 142). The central theme of the book is the search for authentic experience that is masked by the affections and taboos of bourgeois life. Sex is the primary route to existential authenticity. (Krzywinska, 2006, p. 44)

This idea of authenticity through sex and the depiction of sex on screen and the emphasis on the moment of *cinematic time* as the essence of its *real* – or its *authenticity* – is somewhat at odds with the more traditional view of porn as a fundamentally exploitative rather than a vibrantly ontological or existentialist genre of self discovery, whether because of the conventional stress on the harm it may cause to its viewers or the harm it may cause to its actors. And yet it is also in many ways closer to the contemporary exploration of real sex in film and on the web as an aspect of a quest for authenticity and self discovery, (whether of a beautiful truth or of a contemporary darkness), especially in films such as *Atomized* (Roehler, 2006) or *Shortbus* (Mitchell, 2006) or the kinds of early 21<sup>st</sup> century websites such as *YouPorn* or *Beautiful Agony*, the latter of which we will be returning to in due course. For the moment, however, this exploratory notion of the authentic – which is possibly not quite the same as the more generalized 'real' – nonetheless raises questions about the nature of the real which associate it very closely with notions of cinematic time. Leaving to one side for now the psychoanalytically extended and broadly noumenal tradition of the 'real' in figures such as Jacques Lacan these questions will then be centrally concerned with ontology as much as it is with technology, with philosophy and non-philosophy as much as with erotics, with appearance and disappearance rather than the inaccessible 'other' of the post-Freudian and post-Hegelian traditions, and thus crucially with the realm of chronos as much as that of the scopic or the haptic. Accordingly, and to deal with this ontologically material core of the real in what we have called post-transgressive cinema, this paper will begin to adapt

what Gilles Deleuze writes about the real in his study of film in *Cinema One* and more specifically, *Cinema Two* in connection with what he calls 'organic and crystalline narration,' with 'the movement image and the time image,' and with 'the crystal image' and especially with 'the powers of the false,' and through this it will start to diagram a cartography of filmic desire and sex as a dimension of the post transgressive real of the screen.

There are, then, two items at this stage, two phrases in the subtitle of this paper that require clarification. The first is the notion of 'performing the real' and the second, that of 'post-transgressive cinema.' We will attend to the first in more detail, allowing the second to emerge from this discussion through the illumination that we hope such attention will bring. In brief, however, the idea of the post-transgressive in film sex relates to the notion outlined in the introduction to this collection that transgression per se has been so thoroughly commodified as to have lost its more revolutionary edge - as promoted, say, by Michel Foucault in his early essay on Georges Bataille, 'A Preface to Transgression' - to the extent that even the self-consciously confrontational Cinema of Transgression associated with figures such as Nick Zedd, Kembra Pfahler, Casandra Stark, Beth B, Tommy Turner, Richard Kern and Lydia Lunch - not to mention the prominent post-Deleuzian thinker Manuel DeLanda - in the 1970s and 1980s, can now very easily be incorporated into popular culture or advertising with no evident sense of the shock to the bourgeoisie or 'establishment' or 'straight' culture that was initially flagged up by this kind of quasi-modernist avant garde expression. With porn especially, the transition has been paralleled *a fortiori* by the spread and accessibility of hardcore sexual imagery of all kinds on the web, available in theory to anyone with a phone, let alone a tablet or computer. This has led to an intriguing concern with authenticity in certain areas of pornographic production in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; an interest in authenticity that takes a number of forms, but has parallels with the growth of so-called reality-television in the same period, in that it will often film ostensibly 'ordinary' people rather than actors and, in a number of cases, will give more control to the viewer/consumer, (or at least appear to do so) than the producer-based porn of an earlier era. It is this democratization of the porn image - and especially the moving image, that that can be said to have transformed the transgressive aura of porn to a post-trangres-

sive hybrid of playfulness, fetishism, empowerment and (ironically) ontological exhaustion, which in itself indicates something important about the reconfiguration of the reality of sex that new technologies and their attendant discourses of pleasure, commodification and consumer discipline have engendered.

In terms of the performance of the real, then, and without getting too deeply embroiled in metaphysically charged debates on the term and its relation to materiality, empiricism, positivism and the noumenal, suffice it to say that there is a provisional sense in which we can consider the real (or its cognates in the authentic or the genuine) prior to complicating it in relation to the false (or the inauthentic or artificial) as we intend to do here via the thought of Rene Magritte, Jean Baudrillard, Foucault and Deleuze. In the fundamental consideration of whether or not a cinematic text can be deemed 'realist,' for example, it is useful to begin opening up one particularly valuable perspective by acknowledging Magritte's historically influential assertion of what visual images actually are – representations as resemblances or similitudes rather than realities – as he suggests, notably, in his infamous statement below the image of a pipe from 1926, declaring beneath this image, and paradoxically, that: "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" (This is not a pipe.) This moment of apparent tautology or contradiction or paradox has led post-Surrealist writers such as Foucault specifically, but also more indirectly, Deleuze and Baudrillard, to consider and argue (and here we must, of course, greatly over-simplify) for a gradual transformation of the Western image from its uncomfortably mimetic origins in Plato and Aristotle - via moments of iconicity, similitude, verisimilitude, impression and affirmation - to expression itself, and thence to the realms and economies of pure simulacra, simulation, sensation and what Baudrillard notoriously termed hyperreality. The importance of Magritte's image for Foucault in particular is that it indicates the completion of a recent historical process marked previously by Paul Klee's explosion of the distinction between the previously divergent referential capacities and functions of words and images, and next by Wassily Kandinsky's move beyond the geometry of representation and resemblance to a geometry of form and expression (Foucault, 1982, 33-35).

In the case of Magritte's contradictory pipe, then, image and text are evidently distinct, and yet the text is part of the image as

the image is part of the text, gesturing towards the realm of simulacra to come. As Foucault puts it (although, as Martin Jay has noted in his seminal study of the denigration of vision in modernist continental thought, Magritte himself challenged this reading) (Jay, 1993, p. 400 n.):

Resemblance serves representation, which rules over it; similitude serves repetition, which ranges over it. Resemblance predicates itself upon a model it must return to and reveal; similitude circulates the simulacrum as an indefinite and reversible relation of the similar to the similar. (Foucault, 1982, 55)

For Baudrillard, (both building upon and exceeding Foucault), the agon here is less between resemblance and similitude than the play of seduction and pornography. As ever with Baudrillard, terms such as 'seduction' and 'pornography' have an extended set of connotations that take their everyday meaning into new zones of operation. Seduction here is in many ways a development and refinement of his earlier privileging of the symbolic over the semiotic in capitalist exchange systems; an emphasis on the play of appearances as this indicates a real to be taken seriously over the obsessive drive for the real represented by pornography, which in its zeal for the real as obscene becomes an excess of desire rather than a lack as in the psychoanalytic tradition, thereby configuring the hyperreal rather than the real itself. As he notes in *Seduction*, in a chapter titled 'Stereo-Porno':

The *trompe l'oeil* removes a dimension from real space, and this accounts for its seduction. Pornography by contrast adds a dimension to the space of sex, it makes the latter more real than the real – and this accounts for the absence of seduction... Pornographic voyeurism is not sexual voyeurism, but a voyeurism of representation and its perdition, a dizziness born of the loss of the scene and the irruption of the obscene. (Baudrillard 1990, 34-35)

Baudrillard's tactical and partial opposition here between simulation and seduction (the latter of which is also put in tension with the

simulacra and production) emphasises the ways in which the real has been overexposed in late modernity to the extent that it has in itself become the pornographic hyperreal. Seduction, on the other hand, is a play of appearances, of artifice, of the false, which through its hesitations and prevarications across boundaries – its transgressive vibrational patterns – gestures towards the real at the same time as it can never be or substitute for the real. Yet, it could be argued that in the post-transgressive cinema of sex, what was formerly pornographic has in some subtle way moved into the realm of what Baudrillard describes as seduction by virtue of its acceptance of the impossibility of the real as such and celebration of the false as at least a gesture towards the possibility of the real and the authentic. Thus, with the veritable proliferation of recent highly explicit cinema whether in film itself or through other screens, commodities that market themselves in line with various current aesthetic and popular philosophies of the real, it would appear that an *aporia* emerges; a blind-spot in which recent expressions of real-sex on screen are able to transgress hitherto pornographic classifications of porno pleasure and somehow embody real/genuine/ authentic intimacy in the mediated event that they present, but as a gesture towards the real rather than a representation of the real – whether this gesture is between people or between a subject and the camera itself. Such texts as, for example, *Romance* (Breillat, 1999), *Georges Bataille's Story of the Eye* (McElhinney, 2001) and *Shortbus* appear to transgress the supposedly 'realist' conventions of pornography in that they show the real of sex in order to articulate and point to an event in which genuine communication occurs between the 'actors' that has resonance beyond merely arousing an audience. Instead of being merely transgressive representations, then, such texts point to a post-transgressive and post-representational *expression* of the possibility of the real in relation to screening sex in which in meaning or significance is engendered by a pattern of more broadly cultural, historical, social and psychological elements connected and organised by notions of the authentic and the false, intimacy and expression. The two significant active elements here are *intimacy* and *expression*; intimacy being essential, for whether or not the intimate is co-determinate with the real, it undoubtedly has a parallel life to elements of the authentic. Expression, of course, has a complicated relation to the real, as it does to the concept of representation, especially in the



work of Deleuze as he draws upon Baruch Spinoza, but which lies beyond the scope of this article. It is thus to the intimate that we will look first, and its relation to the real and thence to the false and to the post-transgressive.

According to Theodore Zeldin in his *An Intimate History of Humanity*, within modernity there have been three overlapping forms and expressions of intimacy between men and women specifically. The first form of intimacy in early modernity was concerned with space and objects, with places to retreat, cherished objects and domesticity. Then the romantics demanded a second kind of intimacy in which lovers could, through sexual intercourse or exchange, find some kind of union of souls on an affective level. A third form of intimacy noted by Zeldin is about accompanying the purely amorous and passionate charge between lovers, which theoretically at least requires no other significant form of communication for bonding, with a third that does indeed demand communication intellectually as much as affectively. This is a form of intimacy between lovers who share tastes in art or film or music or literature or travel as much as they share and enjoy each other's bodies. This is the form of intimacy that demands attention and reciprocity and most specifically, partnership (Zeldin, 1998, pp 324-326). But it is the second form of intimacy which is simulated and then drained of affect in the conventional pornographic film. Sex in the second sense does, however, start to move from simulation to seduction in certain films in the 1970s, as we will see below, allowing for the emergence of new kind of intimacy of both hope and exhaustion, but most certainly a kind of sharing, even if it does it times stray into the contested zones of perversion or consensual cruelty as in BDSM. Here, and in spite of an apparent lack of affect, at least in terms of intimacy, in certain examples, what is often happening is that intimacy is shifting from what Baudrillard describes as pornography or simulation to seduction. Here, the performance of real sex is expressed as a significant form of communication and moreover, expressed in contradistinction to more traditional pornography, as recourse to go beyond the overt fakery of spectacular cum shots and screaming orgasms as a play of appearances gesturing towards the real – as seduction.

In terms of pornographic film, and as Baudrillard has suggested, this mode of seductive realism is undoubtedly significant – represented in the supposed arousal of the actors as well as the real arous-

al of spectators. Classically, close-up shots of penetration are mediated in order to testify to the reality of the intercourse taking place on screen. Simultaneously however, pornographic film tends to be stylistically uncomplicated with little or no focus on plot or character development but rather, has existed as a genre which utilises conventions of 'talking dirty,' 'raw animal desire,' exhibitionism' and 'cum shots' to authenticate and adhere to pre-existing porno conventions and audience expectations. Sex-on-screen then, or, more specifically, real-sex on-screen, has most dominantly been shown for physical rather than psychological titillation. Due to a lack of character depth in conventional porno, actors appear (consciously) one-dimensional - they are obviously dressed up and ready to fuck. While the penetration is real, authentic in the physical sense, the conventions associated with showing their pleasure to the spectator are often expressed via unoriginal moans and groans which become, over time, more audible so as to signify the forthcoming climax or to indicate a change of position, partner or scene.

New ways of re-presenting (as well as expressing) the real of sex are, of course, inevitably bound by and understood in the context of past theoretical, legal and aesthetic debates which have been utilised in order to segregate and situate major lines of demarcation between explicit materials that are intended to arouse and 'deprave' and those that present explicit content in a non-arousing way. The intention of sex on screen to arouse, or not, has long been linked to aesthetic and moral arguments concerning high and low culture since the inception of film. Certain screens however, have, as Linda Williams notes in 'Cinema and the Sex Act' been able, from the 1970s to partially transgress such a stringent distinction, examples including *Last Tango in Paris* (1972), *Story of O* (1975), *In the Realm of the Senses* (1976) and *A Clockwork Orange* (1971). Yet, despite these specific screens achieving a significant aesthetic and artistic acceptance for their ability to present sex which blurs the boundaries between mainstream and soft-core cinema, it is important to note that the hard-hitting elements in these films are achieved through an equal affiliation and direct reference to hard-core cultural theory and fantasy. What is distinct then between these works and present day real-sex film (besides, in cases, a hard-core appropriation of sex), is a contemporary attempt to convey aesthetic realism – a realism that is naturalistic. In distinction, *Story of O*, for example, locates itself from

the first line as fantasy: 'One day O's lover takes her to a place they've never gone before – Parc Monceau – Parc Montsouris, somewhere around there. They stroll along a luminous road surrounded by dark, dangerous forests. Twilight is approaching and autumn is in the air.' Alongside this narrative which deliberately taps into a schema of fairy story telling via the opening 'One day...' (an opening address echoed by Bunuel - 'Once upon a time' - in *Un Chien Andalou*) and the underspecified setting, the on-screen focus of a well-dressed couple, non-diegetic music and brilliant sunlight points to a lack of consensual reality. The scene is also shrouded in mist indicating a fantasy setting.

A distinction between these films and modern real-sex cinema can thus be drawn on two levels: firstly, the sex represented in these older films is not real. Secondly, the temporal distance between transgressive acts/scenes in the 1970s and present day eradicates some of the transgressive status of the films if they are considered out of context. Despite this, such films have been instrumental in the process of making anew real-sex films today – films in which desire signals excess. This excess however is not always spectacular. Indeed, excess here pertains not to a transgression but to a post-transgressive status. Actors in the real-sex films discussed in this article engage in real sex as recourse to go beyond transgression – to really engage in an event which signals the post-transgressive status a new type of sex on screen. As Linda Williams notes:

Acting implies artifice, being precisely what one is not, though drawing on what one has been in order to create an appearance that is credible. To 'act' in a scene in which the action is sex is, in these explicit moments, to really engage in sex. (Williams, 2001, p.22)

Williams observation raises once again the contemporary hesitation that exists in both the actor and the viewer where real sex on screen is concerned, and it is from the question of the flow of time *as* image and its relation to the production of the false and the authentic as well as to the flow of images in film, that this hesitation emerges. It is a hesitation signalled by Baudrillard but never properly developed, at least in part because he fails to deal in any significant way with the central image of time in the pornographically

hyperreal and the seductively false-real. One very useful way to illuminate this hesitation more fully is through Deleuze's notions of the powers of the false, the organic image and the crystalline image, as he derives these ideas from his reflections on cinema and his reading of the philosopher of duration, Henri Bergson, and it is to these ideas that we will now turn. Here, and centrally, Deleuze's provocative thesis has to do with the distinction he makes between what he calls the "movement image" and the "time-image," as these two concepts define and provide titles for the two cinema books themselves. In terms of the movement image, and in essence, Deleuze asserts that the cinema of the first fifty years, from 1895 to 1945, is dominated by the image embodied not *in* movement but *as* movement. In other words, whether one is looking at the films of Charlie Chaplin or Buster Keaton or directors like Carl Dreyer or Fritz Lang or even early Disney, or indeed early pornography, the focus on the movement image is on the intervals between actions and the ways in which these intervals and actions combine to connect the brain of the viewer with the moving image as a representation of the real. This is a connection between brain and screen that Deleuze calls the "sensory-motor-schema," which is, for him, the mechanism through which we as viewers relate to the external world as series of images organised into a fluxion unity: a unity which, in some way or another, acts to guarantee our sense of truth or reality, whether external or internal. The movement image provides us with this reassurance even when it deals with war, violence or atrocity, because there is an underlying sense of organic unity to its manipulation of space, time and movement. It is a unity that is also predominantly linear in form in that it tells a story, as well as being organic in that it binds together into a whole. It also, for Deleuze, reminds the viewer that whatever its problems, this reality suggested by the movement image is the reality of what he calls (following Gottfried Leibniz more than Voltaire) the best of all possible worlds: a reality conveyed by what he calls organic narration.

What happens as a result of the cataclysm of the Second World War and its seemingly cosmic atrocities, Auschwitz-Belsen and Hiroshima-Nagasaki, (and Deleuze's perspective is undoubtedly Eurocentric here, though that in no way invalidates its power) - is that this sense our world being "the best of all possible worlds" - even

potentially - collapses. The time image emerges accordingly and in response to this crisis from a relationship between the brain and the screen in which intervals and actions no longer rely on a linear sequence indicating the real; a relationship in which cinema is less concerned with the movement and its representation than with consciousness itself. With the time image, then, we also move from organic narration, to what he calls crystalline narration. There is a great deal that might be said about this transition, (and it is, of course, highly challengeable), but in essence it's about the difference between, say, the films of John Ford and the films of David Lynch, between *Stagecoach* and *Lost Highway*. Of course, linear narrative and organic narration and image still thrive in spite of the emergence of crystalline narratives – and sometimes in the same movie as crystalline narratives and images. Orson Welles' *Lady of Shanghai* is possibly a perfect example of that duality at a significant historical moment. Similarly, with Welles' *Citizen Kane* released in 1941, Deleuze notes that we are: "carried away by the undulations of a great wave, time gets out of joint, and we enter into temporality as a state of permanent crisis." (TI 186)

This idea of time being out of joint, that Deleuze (like Jacques Derrida in his *Spectres of Marx*, and for comparable though ontologically dissonant ends – see Blake's *Sonic Spectralities*, forthcoming) borrows from *Hamlet*, defines for him the transition between the movement and time image; a transition from "a unified diegetic world conveyed through spatio-temporal coherence and rational cause-effect editing" to the "jump cuts of Jean-Luc Godard" or the "elegant mismatches" of Alain Resnais (Stam, 2000, 260) But eroticism and pornography are unusual in this regard in that they are based on the temporal structure of fantasy rather than reality, and presumably this has been the case since the first pornographic reels, the first pornographic film images, as they coincided pretty much with the birth of cinema itself. The time of fantasy is often one of loops, recursions, repetitions, suspense, re-visitations of as certain locus or movement or sensation or image, and revisions to increase intensity or possibly to draw it out or re-dramatize it. Is sexual fantasy organic or crystalline in this sense? Or possibly both? And is the gender of fantasy – of the fantasists – of the scenario - of the depicted orgasm - of the pornographer let alone the porn star - significant here? Also, is it still accurate to make this distinction if we

examine the short reels of early cinema, of striptease in the silent movie, and the development of contemporary pornography on the internet? One thing they undoubtedly do have in common is the short clip which has increasingly replaced the full length movie, particularly on the web with the rise of you-porn and similar sites. So this does indeed raise questions about continuities and discontinuities between early and contemporary cinema, and in particular, questions about whether Deleuze's distinction really does what he claims it does?

Porn clips and movies have traditionally been understood as fantasies designed primarily for masturbation rather than for art or realism, (historically male masturbation via scopic passion, voyeuristic power and fetishism), rather, that is, than representations of the best of all possible worlds. But the rise of real sex in the cinema, on video and its equivalents, and increasingly on the web, as well as the normalisation of what would have been considered extreme, not to mention the evident rise of female directors and producers of porn, all raise a number of questions about authenticity, the power of the real and the power of the false, which connect with the nature of reality and fabrication in cinema more generally, and particularly the logic and temporality of fantasy as expressed through the recoding and dissemination of images of real sex in cinematic time. The crucial element here lies with what we have called the democratization of porn. By this, we mean the ways in which new technologies have allowed non-specialists to make their own porn movies, and in doing so, have - to a degree - undermined not only some of the arguments about exploitation in the porn industry, but also, about the necessary objectification of the body in porn.

For Deleuze, the movement image, we may recall, is concerned not with representing or re-presenting movement as such, but of effectively being movement. Images in this sense are part of the flow of life. With the time image, this flow is continued, but loses its linearity, its narrative context, its spatial-temporal position and linear causality. An essential distinction between the parallel notions of organic and crystalline descriptions or narrations is that the organic is concerned primarily with a play between the real and the imaginary, whereas the crystalline absorbs this polarity into a broader schema involving the virtual and the actual. We are not going to digress too much into the many debates about these contested and problematic

terms here, but on one level at least what it means is that crystalline narration has virtual access to all the images that could ever be imagined or un-imagined, including the image of thought itself, the image of the brain (for the brain is merely another image for Deleuze), the images associated with the concepts of philosophy as much as those of cinema or video. This is not to say that virtuality is like an infinite storeroom of potentialities, or potential images, but rather, it may be understood as the precondition for that storeroom's actualization as image. Deleuze writes as follows:

In an *organic* description, the real that is assumed is recognizable by its continuity – even if it is interrupted – by the continuity shots which establish it and by the laws which determine successions, simultaneities and permanences: it is a regime of localizable relations, actual linkages, legal, causal and logical connections....

and continues:

...It is clear that this system includes the unreal, the recollection, the dream and the imaginary, but as contrast.... A film may be entirely made up of dream- images; these will retain their capacity for perpetual disconnection and change which contrasts them with real images. (Deleuze, 1989, p. 126-127)

There are thus two modes of existence in the organic regime – the real and the imaginary. In the crystalline regime, on the other hand:

The two modes of existence are now combined in a circuit where the real and the imaginary, the actual and the virtual, chase after each other, exchange their roles and become indiscernible. (Deleuze, 1989, p.127)

Leading to what Deleuze refers to as the crystal image and the ascendancy of the powers of the false. In regard to the latter, and drawing on the literary and philosophical writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, Herman Melville and Jorges Luis Borges, Deleuze argues that crystalline regimes are fundamentally about appearances rather than

realities, about faking and forging. The time image, as he puts it, belongs to an order in which truth and the real have been converted into artifice by a focus on time extracted and abstracted from the flow of time itself. In other words, the time image de-chronologizes the image and the edit, and narrative itself, to emphasize instead the optical and sonic dimensions of film as its essence, rather than the representation of the real. There are however, potential conflicts in this vision of post-war cinema, and never more than when dealing with the rise of short clips on websites, or more aleatory web-cams, which attempt to provide, on some cases, a warts-and-all form of realism: 'This is me in my bedroom masturbating, fucking, whipping, going down on someone, etc... and me looking bored, putting on make-up, etc'. Specifically, the close ups associated with websites such as *Beautiful Agony* appear, at least initially, to belong more to the attempted realism of the movement image than the irrationalism and unreality of the time image. But is this the case?

For Deleuze, both alone and in his work with Felix Guattari, the issue could be argued to centre on faciality. In the first book of cinema, for example, Deleuze talks of the "Affection Image," (which he associates very strongly with the close up). In general, the face or faciality is what individuates and socializes us, and like the image of Big Brother in George Orwell's *1984*, the face is a form (or rather, constituent) of despotic power. The cinematic close up, however, abstracts the face from its conventional functions, which are, in brief:

- 1 To be individuating, it distinguishes and characterizes each person
- 2 To be socializing, it manifests a social role
- 3 To be relational or communicating, either between two or more people or within an individual (the harmony between one's character and the role one is playing, in Ronald Bogue's exegesis)

The close-up deterritorializes the face from these functions and frees it up from spatio-temporal coordinates, allowing it to express pure affect, pure power, pure feeling, abstracted momentarily from social roles and the structures and discourses of power that permeate these social roles. So in terms of pornographic and the eroticism of the image, the close-up is fundamentally different to other forms of sexual depiction or expression, emancipated from the more con-



ventional demands of sex in the moving image, and can arguably both depersonalize the body, the flesh on the screen, and real-ize the 'real' of the actor/consumer, the affective-flow of the actualized harmony between subjects. Thus faciality here, which can, for Deleuze and Guattari, on the one hand indicate the despotic regime of various organic and corporate micro-fascisms and their precursors as the gaze of power ( Deleuze & Guattari, 1988 , 167-191), might also be able, through the close up, the porno-graphic and post-transgressive close up, to emancipate desire from these despotic constraints and align it instead with emergent temporalities, with molecular and immanent subjectivities, with the real as a perpetual and perpetually oscillating transgression between regimes in the crystal image.

We begin this project by asking the question "Does the Porn Star Blush?" In some ways this is a rhetorical question, as this article is far more about reality and fabrication than blushing or flushing per se, (interesting though the 'blush of the real' most certainly is). However, if we take on board that the real-imaginary dialectic is subsumed by the virtual in crystalline narration, and especially in the crystal image, then everything is fake anyway. Orgasms are just as fake in this sense as the minimal story line that might feasibly be attached to a porn clip, the clumsy acting, self-consciousness or hyperbolization of affect. On the other hand, what we have called the 'democratization of pornography' seems to work according to a notion of authenticity and reality to at least some degree, which attaches the powers of the false to a new kind of authenticity, authenticity as affect at the very least!. These are, after all, *real* people having *real* sex, however unreal the situations might be. One interesting example of this as mentioned above is the website *Beautiful Agony*. Interestingly, too, the full name of the site is *Beautiful Agony: Facettes de la Petite Mort*. This is a site dedicated to screening a collection of clips of 'real' people experiencing orgasm. *Beautiful Agony* advertises itself as a democratic, erotic and contemporary site

dedicated to the beauty of human orgasm. This may be the most erotic thing you have ever seen, yet the only nudity it contains is from the neck up. That's where people are truly naked.

Focusing on faciality, this site also explicitly demands that submitted clips must be filmed on a digital camcorder. Poignantly, the site also states that all footage submitted must be 'raw' and unedited. Further instructions for submission read as follows:

Frame the shot like you see on the site - full face, no nudity, preferably from a point of view above the nose. Make sure you have good light. Daylight from a nearby window is best. If you're using a lamp, it should be to one side, close to you but not too close to the camera, so the light is graded across your face. It will need to be a bright lamp and set the white balance manually to "indoor" (all camcorders have this control). Please don't have any music or the TV playing as it creates a copyright problem. Besides, Agony is an experience for the ears as well as the eyes, so try and keep the background noise down. Capture the warm up, and the cool down. Let us see all of your idiosyncrasies and rituals, but we're only interested in reality, not performances, impressions, or exaggerations. Let the tape run on at the end. You can talk to the camera before, during or after, if you like. Take as long as you need, we'll edit the tape. (<http://www.beautifulagony.com/public/main.php>)

While on the one hand this site holds a place of interest in that it appears dedicated to the democratization of sex and to 'reality' rather than performance, *Beautiful Agony* also insists that they, rather than those submitting, have full editorial control over footage. This certainly problematises the question of 'real control', power and democracy. A further issue can also be found in the site's insistence that all contributors submit 'two takes that are different'. This instruction again calls into question the mission statement of *Beautiful Agony*, specifically its self-proclaimed 'interest in reality, rather than performance'. While concentrating on the face rather than the genitals of the contributors, the 'two take' demand suggests that performance, and in particular, facial performances of extreme pleasure are part of the real. In addition, while the close up appears to signify the 'real,' it is also, through the edit, and specifically in the depiction of real sex, privileging the optical and the sonic over the haptic or verisi-

militude, and in that sense falling back into a logic of fantasy which acts as a force of continuity amidst the discontinuities of the technological and cultural developments in cinematic history and the evolution of the moving image from the short reel to the often equally brief digital clip. It is in this sense that the post-transgressive can be most clearly understood as an acceptance in Baudrillard's age of simulation by both actors and viewers – who are often now one and the same - of authenticity as an experience of the real subjectively expressed as an aspect of the power of the false in which truth and reality are forever subverted by time.

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### **Filmography**

- A Clockwork Orange* (Stanley Kubrick, UK/US, 1971)
- Atomized* (Oskar Roehler, Germany, 2006)
- Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, US, 1941)
- Georges Bataille's Story of the Eye* (Andrew R. McElhinney, US, 2003)
- In the Realm of the Senses* (Nagisa Ôshima, Japan/France, 1976)
- Lady of Shanghai* (Orson Welles, US, 1947)
- Last Tango In Paris* (Bernardo Bertolucci, Italy/France, 1972)
- Lost Highway* (David Lynch, France/US, 1997)
- Romance* (Catherine Breillat, France, 1999)
- Shortbus* (John Cameron Mitchell, US, 2006)
- Stagecoach* (John Ford, US, 1939)
- The Story of O* (Just Jaeckin, France/West Germany/Canada, 1975)
- Un chien andalou* (Luis Buñuel, France, 1929)

## Transgression as Tragic Typology

### O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra and Kushner's Angels in America

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The English playwright and critic Howard Brenton pinpoints the scholarly discussion of tragedy and the tragic in his review of Terry Eagleton's *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic* from 2002: "the doomed search for the holy grail of literary criticism, a definition of tragedy" (Guardian, 2002)<sup>1</sup>. Ever since the Greeks presented their tragedies at the annual Dionysos Festivals, the two concepts have been doomed to lead an ambiguous existence: Tragedy and the tragic bear an aura of aristocracy, the sublime, the noble, the elevated. But it is also, perhaps, the most controversial and debated literary genre of all. Literary critics, scholars and philosophers from both sides of the ideological spectre declared the genre *altmodisch* and *anachronistic* when God was declared dead by Nietzsche et al. The conservatives talked with great sadness of the death of tragedy:

"The difference is that conservative critics believe, along with Nietzsche, that tragedy has died since we no longer believe in fate and the gods. This they lament: a proper appreciation of the darkness of human hearts has "ruinously yielded in our time to chance, contingency, democracy, rationality, religious disenchantment and a callow progressivism". As Steiner puts it: "At the touch of Hume

and Voltaire the noble or hideous visitations which had haunted the mind since Agamemnon's blood cried out for vengeance disappeared altogether or took tawdry refuge among the gaslight of melodrama." (Brenton, 2002, *ibid.*)

Contrary to this we find the radicals, the left-wing liberals, who always had their problems and trouble with the tragic genre and modus:

The left usually favours an anti-tragic mode. Bakhtin, the guru of alternative radical theatre in the 1960s, is against premature harmonising, the tightening of the world into a metaphysical view. He believes truth lies in the open-ended, the "carnavalesque": a tragic plot expresses "the profound crime of all self-asserting individuality". (Brenton, 2002, *ibid.*)

So far, however, research traditions have not focused on the fundamental differences between the European-Greek definitions and the American dittos<sup>2</sup>. This article suggests that the American tragic drama must be read and interpreted as a highly individual and original vision of tragedy and the tragic in two acclaimed works: *Mourning becomes Electra* (1931) by Eugene O'Neill and *Angels in America* (1992-1993) by Tony Kushner. Tragedy as a literary genre and the tragic as ontological terminology are per se a transgressive typology and modus. The main perspective is centered around the biblical apocalypse and the perspective is two-fold: First, I attempt to modify traditional scholarly readings on O'Neill's and Kushner's dramas as purely pessimistic. Second, I distillate an aesthetic vision of transgression that transcends the destruction and culminates in a reconstruction - structurally as well as thematically - that constitutes the exceptional American tragedy and the tragic.

### **THE APOCALYPSE AS TRAGIC-THEOLOGICAL MODUS AND MYTHOS: A TRANSGRESSIVE TERMINOLOGY OF TRUTH**

The word 'apocalypse' refers to the books of the four great prophets in The Old Testament and The Revelation, the last book of The New Testament. The word is connected to the expectation of the great re-

demption, which its Greek etymology supports: "revelation". But the apocalypse has another, and much darker, meaning in the Latin version: "destruction", the nihilation of the sinful. Hitherto, the Latin version is the most applied, but I find that it levels out the original ambiguity of the word. Therefore, I maintain the dialectical meaning inherent in the term. In the following, the main characteristics of the American apocalypse are presented.

The apocalypse is a vision, a prophecy of the end of times, where God will punish the sinners, deliver the faithful and finally restore the original paradise. The four great prophets are Esaia, Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Daniel, who are chosen to speak the voice and vision of God. Thus, the first characteristic of the apocalypse is the divine individual, who is chosen and isolated, unique and alone. The sacred subject is the tragedy's top priority and the primary element that drives the tragic plot.

Also, an irreversible and predetermined movement from before to now to after is always present in an apocalyptic tragedy: An original idyllic space of Eden, which has been contaminated by the sins of the unfaithful. Consequently, the day of doom is predicted through an anticipatory language as "for the day of their calamity is at hand" (Revelation, 16:10); a cloudy day, as the word signifies, when the kingdom of the beast will be full of darkness and confusion and the consequences are pure terror: "And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name" (ibid., 12:14). But the degeneration and horrific destruction is necessary as a purging, a ritual cleansing. The American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson writes in his lyrical essay "On the Tragic" from 1844: "Come bad chance, / And we add to it our strength, / And we teach it art and length, / Itself o'er us to advance" (Emerson, 1844)<sup>3</sup>.

The monumental culmination is another textual element that is recognizable, it is the thematic dénouement. After the destruction the tone of the text shifts significantly - I quote from the famous passage of Revelation's chapter 21:

And I saw a New Heaven and a New Earth: for the first Heaven and the first Earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

And I John saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a Bride adorned for her Husband.

And I heard a great voice out of Heaven saying, Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are True and Faithful.

And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the Water of Life freely.

Cosmos has been restored - the apocalypse is a monumental transgression in a processual meeting between destruction and reconstruction, a dissolution of the dominating norms, values, morals and ethics, which are unhealthy and sinful for a (Christian) society's welfare and its citizens' correct development. The intention of this transgressive action is individual and collective invigoration. As a result the resurrection in the American translation becomes the fusion of the individual salvation beyond death and the great collective and national hope of the future kingdom. The legitimacy and validity of the apocalyptic mythology is found in the paradigmatic and ritual repetition, which offers an absolute clarification of human existence. The mythos, as the apocalypse, becomes a series of repetitious actions that culminates in an apocalyptic scenario - a scenario that nullifies all the painful human contradictions and tribulations. The apocalyptic myth articulates an unequivocal and authoritative meaning or truth, a harmonic vision of cosmos. In other words, the apocalypse offers a special sense of being and insight, in which human beings can reach ontological clarification. But how does the apocalyptic transgression of tragedy and the tragic manifest itself in American drama as represented by Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning becomes Electra* and Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*?



First of all, the divine individual and his/her actions are prioritized in the American apocalypse and are the element that relentlessly drives the plot forward. This is a fundamental difference between the Aristotelian theory of tragedy in Aristotle's famous *Poetics*, in which the protagonist is secondary to the all-structuring and all-important plot - for instance Antigone, Oedipus, Orestes, Medusa and Electra, whose movements, actions, choices and dilemmas are structural elements decided by the tragic plot. This is clearly not the case in *Mourning becomes Electra* and *Angels in America*. O'Neill depicts the Mannon family after the American civil war ended in 1865 and the family patriarch Ezra returns to his unfaithful wife, Christine, and her lover, Adam Brant. The son Orin also returns, but he is haunted by war traumas, family secrets, and his incestuous relationship with his mother. The daughter Lavinia is the tragedy's divine individual. Her entrance in the play accentuates her special status: O'Neill presents her from below, in obedient worm's eye perspective: "Lavinia comes out to the top of the steps" (O'Neill, 1988, p. 897), She is "twenty-three", but looks "considerably older" - a hint of her old-age life experience. Physically, Lavinia is "thin, flat-chested and angular", "stiff and she carries herself with a wooden, square-shouldered, military bearing" (ibid.). She lives an ascetic life full of hatred and bitterness but also of longing and searching for the truth about the family past.

The second characteristic of the American apocalyptic tragedy is the irreversible and sacred mission of the divine individual. Lavinia embodies both a pietistic nun and a female savior who has dedicated herself fully to a predetermined mission towards insight, realisation and truth: The exorcism of the family sins and the hope of redeeming herself in order to be saved and ultimately regenerated. Lavinia is her own judge, prosecutor and defence lawyer in her holy search for redemption. This mission is also referred to in her name's etymology: 'Lavinia' refers to 'levin', which means 'enlightenment' and 'electricity', and it also refers back to the Latin 'lavare', which means 'to wash' or 'to cleanse and purge'. Lavinia is the apocalyptic apotheosis.

The divine individual in *Angels in America* is Prior Walter - a stigmatized, homosexual Christ-like character, who through dry and wry humour, extravagant rhetorics and tragic irony bears his symbolic cross: his HIV-diagnosis. Prior is a typical apocalyptic

prophet and Harper Lee sees that early on in one of Priors hallucinations:

HARPER: I see something else about you...

PRIOR: Oh?

HARPER: Deep inside you, there's a part of you, the most inner part, entirely free of disease. I can see that.

PRIOR: Is that... That isn't true.

HARPER: Threshold of revelation.

Home.

(Kushner, 1995, p. 40)

The crowning of Prior as a postmodern crucible of prophet and Christ is incorporated in a bombastic and melodramatic - and quite funny - scene, where an angel bursts through the bedroom ceiling:

ANGEL (*With another gust of music*):

American Prophet tonight you become,

American Eye that pierceth Dark,

American Heart all Hot for Truth,

The True Great Vocalist, the Knowing Mind,

Tongue-of-the-land, Seer-Head!

(Kushner, 1995, p. 188)

Kushner's tragedy in two parts is a predetermined movement towards a purging of Prior himself and the corrupted, sinful American nation of the 1980s, the Ronald Reagan-years. Subsequently, Lavinia and Prior revitalize Arthur Miller's views on tragedy and the tragic in his essay from 1949, "Tragedy and the Common Man":

I believe that the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy in its highest sense as kings were (...) enacted by royal beings, but which apply to everyone in similar emotional situations. (Miller, 1949)<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, a revolutionary modus of action is typical of the American tragic heroine/hero - whether it is Lavinia's angered and painful mission towards unravelling her family secrets or it is Prior's reluctant mission of healing and forgiveness. Both in-

dividuals' holy missions structure and move the tragic plot forward. But the will to act and cross the boundaries (politically, ideologically, morally, ethically, emotionally) is not equivalent to committing the monumental Aristotelian 'flaw' - the hero's 'hamarthis'. As Miller states, it is not necessarily a "weakness". American tragic heroines/heros move closely around the possibility of committing hubris, but in the end the heroine/hero is right and not wrong in her or his choices: O'Neill and Kushner let their protagonists be redeemed. The tragic in American tragedies are centered around the fact that it is the *right* decision that unleashes the tragic dénuement.

The unique position of Lavinia and Prior, though, does not come without a cost - Lavinia is stigmatized by her family's sins:

I'm afraid to wait. The dead coming between. I want a little happiness – in spite of all the dead! I've earned it! I've done enough! I want a moment of joy – of love – to make up for what's coming. I want it now! Can't you be simple and pure? Can't you forget sin and see that love is beautiful? (...) Take me in the house of the dead and love me! Our love will drive the dead away! It will shame them all back into death! (*then with a hopeless, dead finality*) Always the dead between! It's no use trying any more! (O'Neill, 1988, p. 1052)

However, she is determined to wear the symbolic cross and break the otherwise predetermined family course towards the ultimate tragic explosion and destruction. Prior, as well, accepts his divine call, but not without suspicion and reluctance:

A VOICE (*It is an incredibly beautiful voice*): Look up!  
PRIOR (*Looking up, not seeing anyone*): Hello?  
A VOICE: Look up!  
PRIOR: Who's that?  
A VOICE: Prepare the way!  
PRIOR: I don't see any...  
(*There is a dramatic change in the lighting, from above*)  
A VOICE: Look up, Look up,  
prepare the way

the infinite descent  
A breath in the air floating down  
Glory to...  
PRIOR: Hello? Is that it? Helooooo?  
What the fuck...? (*He holds himself*)  
Poor me. Poor poor me. Why me? Why poor me? Oh I  
don't feel good right now. I really don't.  
(Kushner, 1995, pp. 40-41)

The divine prophet is the fusion of the individual and national hope of salvation. This hope is the tragedy's final goal, which is anticipated through a predetermined and irreversible plot movement and a repeated use of an anticipatory vocabulary - markers and elements anticipate the monumental culmination. This textual anticipation is the fourth characteristic of the American tragedy and the tragic, which can be found in *Mourning becomes Electra* and *Angels in America*. In O'Neill's trilogy this is expressed through the stage directions that mark the return of Ezra and the fatal oath between Christine and Adam Brant: ("The boom of a cannon sounds from the fort that guards the harbor" (O'Neill, 1988, p. 926). Additionally, two external elements threaten the Mannons: Adam Brant by moving towards the otherwise closely sealed house of the Mannons and the town's people, whose gossip anticipates the tragic development of the trilogy: "pride goeth before a fall and that some day God would humble them in their sinful pride" (ibid., p. 953). The family is described as "queer" (ibid., p. 896) and "they don't want folks to guess their secrets" (ibid., p. 897), because "The Mannons got skeletons in their closets same as others! Worse ones" (ibid.). These secrets are connected to the family mansion, which is built on "extensive grounds" and likened to "the Greek temple type". But the house does not resonate harmony and beauty. Christine describes the house as "our tomb" (ibid., p. 903), "a temple of death" (ibid., p. 938) and "a sepulchre" (ibid.) filled with "puritan-grey ugliness" (ibid.) and "hatred" (ibid., p. 904). Small curses "the town's drunk" and calls it "This durned place!" (ibid., p. 1012), "this house bein' haunted", "there's been evil in that house since it was first built in hate - and it's kept growin' there ever since, as what's happened there has proved" (ibid., p. 1013). Even though the Greek temple is the ar-

chetype of architectural perfection, it is also a cold aesthetics that does not denote life and passion - the house is a dialectical symbol of fulfillment and death, perfection and stasis.

Anticipatory language is also dominant in Kushner's epic tragedy: The mentally unstable but also truth-telling prophet Harper Pitt - together with the course of the satan-parallel Roy Cohn - drives the plot towards its predetermined culmination. Harper's name refers to 1) 'Harper' as someone who plays the harp and to the iconic visualizations of angel's with harps and 2) 'Harpyr', which is a mighty and dirty creature with an angels face and a vulture's body. Her last name refers to 'pit', a hole in the ground, which in Christian mythology is parallel to hell. Harper predicts the destruction, the "collapsing" and, in the end, transgressive apocalypse:

People, who are lonely, people left alone, sit talking nonsense to the air, imagining... beautiful systems dying, old fixed orders spiraling apart... When you look at the ozone layer, from the outside, from a spaceship, it looks like a pale blue halo, a gentle, shimmering aureole encircling the atmosphere encircling the earth. Thirty miles above our heads, a thin layer of three atom oxygen molecules, product of photosynthesis, which explains the fussy vegetable preference for visible light, its rejection of darker rays and emanations. Danger from without. It's a kind of gift from God, the crowning touch to the creation of the world; guardian angels, hands linked, make a spherical net, a blue-green nesting orb, a shell of safety for life itself. But everywhere, things are collapsing, lies surfacing, systems of defense giving way... (Kushner, 1995, pp. 22-23)

Harper is the prophet of the apocalypse and when she leaves the city she preaches one last vision of a new American paradise:

HARPER: I dreamed we were there. The plane leapt the tropopause, the safe air, and attained the outer rim, the ozone, which was ragged and torn, patches of it threadbare as old as cheesecloth, and that was frightening...

But I saw something only I could see, because of my astonishing ability to see such things:

Souls were rising, from the earth far below, souls of the dead, of people who had perished, from famine, from war, from plague, and they floated up, like skydivers in reverse, limbs all akimbo, wheeling and spinning.

And the souls of these departed joined hands, clasped ankles and formed a web, a great net of souls, and the souls were three-atom oxygen molecules, of the stuff of ozone, and the outer rim absorbed them, and was repaired.

Nothing's lost forever. In this world, there is a kind of painful progress. Longing for what we've left behind, and dreaming ahead.

At least I think that's so.

(Kushner, 1995, pp. 291-292)

All these text elements lead towards the transgressive praxis: The destruction and purging, which are followed by the regeneration and The New Jerusalem:

I Åb. 21-22 beskrives frelsens mål, dens *hvortil*, som en ny himmel og ny jord, som et nyt Jerusalem, der kommer ned fra himlen og som livets træ og flod fra paradiset have, der genoprettes i Det nye Jerusalem. I dette nye Jerusalem er der ingen død, sorg, plage, nat eller gudløse mennesker. Her lever de frelste af frugt fra livets træ og vand fra livets flod, og her lever de sammen med Jahve og Jesus. Her er tilstanden før syndefaldet åbenbart genoprettet, og derfor kan der i Det Nye Testamente tales om denne tilstand som en 'genoprettelse' (*apokatastisis* ApG 3, 21) eller en 'genfødelse', nemlig af verden (*palin-genesia*, Matt 19, 28) (Bilde, 2001, p. 226)

Lavinia survives as the only one in the family. Symbolically, she isolates herself in the house as an analogy to Jesus Christ, whose body is taken to the cave - only to be resurrected:

Don't be afraid. I'm not going the way Mother and Orin went. That's escaping punishment. And there's none left to punish me. I'm the last Mannon. I've got to punish myself! Living alone here with the dead is a worse act of

justice than death or prison! I'll never go out or see anyone! I'll have the shutters nailed closed so that no sunlight can ever get in. I'll live alone with the dead, and keep their secrets, and let them hound me, until the curse is paid out and the last Mannon is let die! (*with a strange cruel smile of gloating over the years of self-torture*) I know they will see to it I live for a long time! It takes the Mannons to punish themselves for being born! (...) You go now and close the shutters and nail them tight. And tell Hannah to throw out all the flowers. (...) *She ascends to the portico – and then turns and stands for a while, stiff and square shouldered, staring into the sunlight with frozen eyes. Seth leans out the window at the right of the door and pulls the shutters closed with a decisive bang. As if this were a word of command, Lavinia pivots sharply on her heel and marches woodenly into the house, closing the door behind her.* (O'Neill, 1988, pp. 1053-1054)

Prior Walter makes his closing speech in front of the cleansing Angel of Bethesda Fountain and he is elevated to the salvation's "more life". The American tragedy and the tragic move towards the timely culmination of the apocalyptic-transgressive process, which Ralph Waldo Emerson defines in characteristically apocalyptic rhetorics:

Time the consoler, Time the rich carrier of all changes, dries the freshest tears by obtruding new figures, new costumes, new roads, on our eye, new voices on our ear. As the west wind lifts up again the heads of the wheat which were bent down and lodged in the storm, and combs out the matted and dishevelled grass as it lay in night locks on the ground, so we let in Time as a drying wind into the seed field of thoughts which are dark and wet and low bent. Time restores to them temper and elasticity. How fast we forget the blow that threatened to cripple us. Nature will not sit still; the faculties will do somewhat; new hopes spring, new affections twine, and the broken is whole again. (Emerson, 1844)<sup>5</sup>

Despite the fact that Arthur Miller writes his thoughts on tragedy and the tragic much later than Emerson, it is possible to find parallels between his and Emerson's reflections on regeneration:

There is a misconception of tragedy with which I have been struck in review after review, and in many conversations with writers and readers alike. It is the idea that tragedy is of necessity allied to pessimism. Even the dictionary says nothing more about the word than that it means a story with a sad or unhappy ending. This impression is so firmly fixed that I almost hesitate to claim that in truth tragedy implies more optimism in its author than does comedy, and that its final result ought to be the reinforcement of the onlooker's brightest opinion of the human animal. (...) For, if it is true to say that in essence the tragic hero is intent upon claiming his whole due as a personality, and if this struggle must be total and without reservation, then it automatically demonstrates the indestructible will of man to achieve his humanity. (...) The possibility of victory must be there in tragedy. (Miller, 1949)<sup>6</sup>

As described earlier, the apocalypse culminates in a monumental subversion. The next chapter investigates this culmination as another special American feature, which separates the American tragedy from its European origins.

### **AMERICAN TRAGEDY AND THE TRAGIC AS A PROCESSUAL-SOTERIOLOGICAL MEETING BETWEEN THE VERTICAL AND THE HORIZONTAL**

Through descriptive and normative reflections on the production of aesthetics Aristotle treats tragedy as formal structure and the emotional effect of his key term "catharsis". But the idea of the tragic is of no interest to Aristotle. Instead, we must turn to his European colleagues, G.W.F. Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, as the most influential philosophers of the tragic as a philosophical-ontological concept. Common to these otherwise very different thinkers is the transgressive collision as the essence of the tragic.

Hegel's favorite tragedy is *Antigone* by Sophocles. In his famous interpretation the Hegelian idea of the tragic unfolds as a collision



between two legal and equal rights, which in the denial of the other position is transformed into evils. The only solution to the tragic collision is the heroine's fall in order to restore cosmic harmony - the Hegelian tragic is that night, where the spirit is betrayed and transformed into a subject, the famous depopulation of heaven. Kierkegaard, too, writes of a collision, but in more religious terms: Between the Augustinian predetermination of original sin and the Pelegian antithesis of free will. Kierkegaard also uses *Antigone* as his analysis, but with another aim, and thus, Kierkegaard calls for a "Middelvei" between the two. Accordingly, the "sande Tragiske" is articulated as a middle course between guilty action and innocent suffering. Lastly, according to Nietzsche, the tragic collision is between the chilly, plastic Apollinian and the ecstatic, life-giving and transgressive Dionysian. Via his theory of tragedy Nietzsche criticizes and accuses the contemporary society of solely relying on reason and rationality and ignoring the Dionysian aspects of life. As shown, the European discussions of the tragic focus on the transgressive collision as terminal or final, which is an oppositional modus compared to the American version.

O'Neill transports his divine individual and savior Lavinia Mannon to the necessary but non-final collision: Because of the family sins Lavinia moves irreversibly towards the symbolic and monumental transgression. Like Jesus in the cave she will resurrect, be ready for salvation and wander into the New Jerusalem. Thus, Lavinia breaks the family's tradition of vertical power relations and original sin, and she is able to reach the horizontally motivated vision of the new Eden.

This transgressive and apocalyptic vision is repeated in *Angels in America*. Kushner's martyr, stigmatized victim and reluctant savior, Prior Walter, moves towards a full dedication to "more life" that marks the necessary purging of sin and corruption. Instead, more love, more democracy and more empathy in America are needed. Conclusively, it is not the typical European finality that characterizes the American vision of tragedy and the tragic. Instead, the texts offer a dialectic process and exchange between destruction and the reconstruction. The three-step processual culmination is basically a fulfillment of before, now and after. This trilogy of textual-transgressive elements can be compared to the idea of the Christian soteriology:

Soteriologi betegner de forestillinger, som bestemte religiøse grupper gør sig om frelsens *hvorfra*, *hvortil* og *hvorledes*. Frelsens *hvorfra* refererer til den aktuelle, negativt bestemte situation, som den pågældende gruppe oplever som udtryk for gudsforladthed eller som udtryk for det (den) ondes herredømme. Frelsens *hvortil* henviser til den eskatologiske ophævelse af denne negative tilstand og til oprettelsen af et utopisk samfund, et messiansk rige, en fornyet jord, et Paradis eller en himmel, dvs. det sted, hvor guddommelig vilje og dermed per definition retfærdighed hersker uindskrænket. Frelsens *hvorledes* betegner den eller de måder hvorpå den første tilstand overvindes og erstattes med den sidste. Der refereres til guddommelige indgreb, især i form af sendelse af en fra himmelen udgået åbenbarer - og/eller frelserskikkelse og i form af en guddommeligt udvirket fjernelse af de gudfjendtlige magter. (Bilde, 2001, p. 216)

The words processual-organic must be accentuated, in that the transgressive modus of the apocalypse is a mythological process: A ritual predetermination and repetitious irreversibility that separates the American idea of the tragic from its European-Greek counterpart. The final chapter of the article will analyze the final difference between the two continents' expressions of tragedy and the tragic: The interpretation of the key term catharsis.

### **THE DIDACTIC INTENTION OF AMERICAN TRAGEDY AND THE TRAGIC: THE POSTHUMOUS EXPRESSION OF MORALITY AND ONTOLOGICAL REALIZATION**

This is where the American dramatists come most closely to adopting the Aristotelian key terminology of catharsis. The term refers to the pity and fear that must be invoked in the audience and, ultimately, this pity and fear cleanses and purges. The Danish scholar Maj Skibstrup defines Aristotle's typology of catharsis:

(...) den erkendelse, der opstår af en stærk og lidelsesfuld oplevelse. Men det er ikke en hvilken som helst form for stærk sansoplevelse, der skaber erkendelse. Det er den lidelsesfulde oplevelse, som skaber nydelse. Gennem sit

fuldkomne dramatiske forløb, hvor alle dele har en funktion i forhold til enheden ligesom i 'en enkelt levende organisme', skaber tragedien erkendelse af den indre og sandsynlige sammenhæng i de agerendes handlinger – og renser dermed publikums følelse af frygt og medlidenhed'. Det er den rensede oplevelse af, at det kunne ske for enhver – af det almene i de konkrete menneskers handlinger – der både skaber den afklarede og nydelsesfulde følelse af frygt og medlidenhed hos publikum. (Skibstrup, 2004, p. 167)

The Europeans believe in a general and collective experience based on that fear, which stems from the minor status of human beings in the universe as compared to the gods - the vertical relation between gods and humans. By contrast, the Americans tend to believe in a more horizontal and dialectic relation between God and his divinely chosen people. The American purging is not restricted or reduced to the psychological, philosophical or ontological aspect. The American cleansing must conform to a religious-ideologic catharsis that will take America towards a fulfillment of the prophecy of a New Jerusalem. Naturally, an enormous fear and anxiety will arise during the movement toward this transgressive-apocalyptic culmination, but the fear is always secondary to the longing for and belief in the prophecy. This longing is the *raison d'être* and *dénouement* of the American tragedy and the tragic.

The main argument is that the final difference between the European-Greek and American typology and modus can be located in the morality and didactic intention of the tragedy: The tragic realization or insight of the heroine/hero happens *before* death - for instance: Oedipus realizes his tragic mistakes before he dies. According to the Aristotelian aesthetics, the painful suffering of the heroine/hero and following cleansing of the audience does not make sense if it is placed after the death of the protagonist. How else can the state and its citizens learn from the morality of the tragedy? By watching and learning from the Aristotelian tragedy the audience is confirmed - through pity and fear - in their dedication to the state, and thus the European-Greek tragedy is and must be edifying and didactic.

In toto: The American dramatists' take on tragedy and the tragic is fundamental different. In the American vision the didactics appear *after* the physical or symbolic death of the heroine/hero. The moral intention of the tragedy unfolds in the resurrection. Despite Lavinia's angry dreams of revenge and Prior Walter's repeated denial of his chosenness, the readers/audience are never in doubt: The tragic plot and the response of the audience are controlled towards the transgressive collision and the regenerative salvation. The didactics can only be reached through this individual and collective regeneration. Additionally, this is closely related to the American use of hamartha, 'flaw'. The Greek heroine/hero of the tragedies commit hubris and releases 'nemesis' the causal chain of reactions, and the Aristotelian hamartha is naturally defined as sinful and wrong. The consequence is simple: moral and ethical denunciation and condemnation of the sinner(s) by the gods, the other characters in the play, and from the audience. But according to the Americans it is their correct and right decisions that catapult them into the predetermined and irreversible movement towards destruction: The processual-soteriological collision of the American idea of the tragic is unleashed from the confirmation of the American nation, people and cosmos. Subsequently, there is a potentially greater and more omnipotent pain, suffering and despair caused by the thought of the potential atomization and destruction of the entire universe. The American tragedy shows the possibility of both splintering and recreating cosmic harmony through the transgressive apocalyptic tragedy and the tragic.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> [http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2002/sep/21/highereducation.news#article\\_continue](http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2002/sep/21/highereducation.news#article_continue)
- <sup>2</sup> Currently, there is two works, to my knowledge, that attempt to discuss a distinct American tragedy: *The Closed Frontier: Studies in American Tragedy* from 1970 by Harold P. Simonsons and *The Three Masks of American Tragedy* from 1974 by Dan Vogel. Simonson is a literary and cultural critic, and he compares the idea of Frederic Jackson Turner's 'frontier' to a concept of American tragedy. However, Simonson exemplifies his otherwise in-

teresting analysis on novels by Mark Twain and Nathaniel West. Additionally, Simonson talks of tragedy as a theme, not as a specific literary or theatrical form. Vogel is specifically arguing that tragedy is a distinct American drama discourse, but he also exemplifies his thesis on the three literary genres: Novels, drama and poetry.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.emersoncentral.com/tragic.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <http://vccslitonline.cc.va.us/tragedy/milleressay.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.emersoncentral.com/tragic.htm>

<sup>6</sup> <http://vccslitonline.cc.va.us/tragedy/milleressay.htm>

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## Religion in Scandinavian Crime Fiction

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Crime fiction has generally been associated with empirical investigation and rational analysis. The genre is often historically linked to modern society, secular mind-frames and natural and realistic explanations of events (Hansen, 2012). Nevertheless, it is possible to identify a link to appearances transgressing this epistemological boundary of the genre. In addition, contemporary Scandinavian crime fiction is showing a significant interest in aspects of human existence transcending empirical and rational realism. Recent genre developments build a bridge into questions about spirituality.

What I intend to do here is, firstly, to develop a theoretical framework for this discussion where I consider theories of transgression and religion. Secondly, I wish to run through five relatively popular examples of Scandinavian crime fiction to show how this genre trend works. Lastly, I will connect this with what has been dubbed *mediatized religion* and a more general, philosophical explanation of why we see this development: The project of modernity is, as a result of cultural changes, at the moment *transgressing* its own epistemological boundaries opening up into what has been called the *post-secular*. Methodologically, as it may appear, I wish to give a cultural explanation of a growing tendency in recent Scandinavian crime fiction. More precisely, I wish to connect this genre de-

velopment with the concept of transgression and a philosophical framing of religion.

### Transgression and religion

In his book *Transgression* (2003) Chris Jenks explicates how a “common characteristic of all religious belief, namely the recognition of the sacred and the profane, presupposes a classification of all things, actual and imaginary, into two opposing domains” (Jenks, 2003, p. 29). This is, by all means, a result of modernity’s philosophical focus on a combination of the rational and the empirical stemming from theories of Enlightenment (Schanz, 2008). “The two realms are not alternatives”, Jenks then underlines, “they are profoundly distinct, ranked in terms of power and dignity, and insulated by antagonism and hostility” (Jenks, 2003, p. 29). The on-going skirmish between *modern realism* and *religious metaphysics* is, then, the most basic version of this hostility. In the words of the sociologist Barry A. Kosmin *soft secularism* has attempted to privatize religion and remove it from the public sphere while *hard secularization* has had as its basic premise that reason in the end will outdo religion (Kosmin, 2007, p. 3). “The two orders”, continues Chris Jenks, “jealously patrol their own boundaries to prevent the contamination of one by the other and thus the perpetually revived structure of interdictions or taboos serves to keep things apart” (Jenks, 2003, p. 29). Nevertheless, this clear boundary between modernity’s philosophical realism and religious metaphysics has been undergoing a transformation, but is then again almost anticipated by Jenks: “Transition from one realm to the other is not wholly precluded, and it requires not movement but metamorphosis” (ibid.). In other words, modernity and religion need to transform in order to be able rub off on each other. The boundary between realism and the religious, says philosophers of the post-secular, has been transgressed into a significant type of modernity that now again leaves room for the spiritual. This has – as we shall see here – been affecting modern, contemporary Scandinavian crime fiction as well. Lastly, I return to the concept of the post-secular.

As it may appear throughout my argument, I see a connection between metaphysics as a philosophical practice, religious philosophy, and aspirations from supernatural elements. This is not at all to say that these spheres are the same, but it is an attempt to find a



framework that deals with various transgressions of the rational and the empirical in different ways that still have an interface. All three spheres – metaphysics, religion, and the supernatural – appear in Scandinavian crime fiction (Hansen, 2012), though in my paper here I only deal with religion. *Metaphysics* is in this framing a philosophical reflexive practice that deals with absolute preconditions for existence, whereas *religion* is a much more formalized, liturgical practice that results in both dogmatic doctrines as well as a transposed and informal framing of life. The supernatural is, then, a more superstitious treatment of epistemological transgressions. Incidents of diverse transgressions can, then, lead to what has been called *religious* or *metaphysical experience* (Schanz, 1999, p. 25), while metaphysics and religious philosophy still attempt to discuss these experiences within limits of valid arguments. Metaphysics would probably refute most supernatural explanations, but both spheres show an aspiration towards sensations beyond rational and empirical explanations. Religion would then appear somewhere in the middle of these sensibilities: “Religion deals with cultural strategies of interpretation and social mechanisms”, writes I.S. Gilhus and L. Mikaelsson, sociologists of religion. They introduce the specifically religious with a reference to “transempirical powers, i.e. beings transgressing the senses” which would be for instance gods. These powers induce the appearance of ideal interpretations and practices that come out “perfect and deeply meaningful” (1998, p. 19)<sup>1</sup>.

This ends my brief theoretical and philosophical framing. I now turn to specific analyses of religion in Scandinavian crime fiction which hopefully makes this dense philosophy appear in clarity. There are various ways that religion may appear in crime fiction. The two extremes are a subversive critique of religion on the one hand and an affirmative apologetic religious discourse on the other. This generally means that crime fiction may claim to do away with religion which is basically in line with its link to modernity. In contrast, crime fiction does as well attempt to ratify religious thought which is a rather unusual expansion of the genre. However, many narratives of crime and religion are not particularly attracted to neither harsh criticism nor sermonizing divinity – several narratives are placed somewhere in the middle whereby modern rationality is in dialogue with spiritual reflections. My five examples, then, rep-

resent various media – i.e. radio drama, TV-fiction, film, and literature – while they also show different modes towards the divine from subversive criticism to affirmative divinity.

### Critique of religion

My first example is a radio drama by the Danish dramatist Tomas Lagerman Lundme. His *Women Reproving God* [*Kvinder der irettesætter Gud*] (2009) is a story about the police officer Thomas who investigates the murder of a young woman. The investigation uncovers a Christian female sect that, as the drama phrases it, “tries to liberate women from men”. Two women have escaped the sect – one of them is a journalist who is trying to prove the fundamentalist intentions of the sect that justifies its actions through divine approval. This means that the journalist becomes – as the title indicates – a woman who reproves God. Thomas, the investigator, is in line with her position and, endingly, he claims that the sect consists of “daft religious idiots enchanting the truth”. In an article Carole M. Cusack explains religion in crime fiction as “pictured as ‘Other’ to mainstream society [where] the authors do not seek to understand these communities, but use them as a challenge to the norms of society” (Cusack, 2005, p. 159). Lundmes sect in *Women Reproving God* is by all means ‘Other’ to mainstream Danish society. This is, then, a good example of subversive critique of religion.

This subversive critique of religion also appears in Stieg Larssons *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Larsson, 2005). This novel applies at first – through five quotations from Leviticus, the third book of Moses – a gender critical perspective on the Old Testament. These quotes are drastic doctrines about how women would be treated should they break the Law of Moses, and they work in analogy with four quotes in the novel from a Swedish study of men’s violence against women. However, Stieg Larsson’s novel diverges from this critical angle on religion by letting Lisbeth Salander comment on the matter – with a clear reference to the original Swedish title *Men who hate woman* [*Män som hatar kvinnor*]: “This is no mad serial killer who has misread the Bible. It is only a usual fool who hates women” (Larsson, 2005: 369). Nevertheless, the quotes suggestively smoulder on a more symbolic and transfigured level. This leads to a speculative reading of the three novels which I return to later.

### Abrahamic reconciliation

My next example – the Danish TV-series *The Protectors* [*Livvagterne*] (2008) – is somewhat more complex. Several episodes of the series deal with religiously motivated extremism and terror that is either experienced or prevented by the Danish intelligence service. At first this means that the series is very affirmative towards the increased authority of the police, which should make you think that the series places the criminal parties in the subversive role. Though this is the case dealing with very hardline extremism this does not describe the overall intension of the series.

The three main characters in *The Protectors* represent three different monotheistic religions. One is Muslim, one is Jewish, and one is Christian. But the series not only represents three major world faiths – it also attempts reconciliation between the three. The religious cease-fire is underlined by the fact that one of the agents moves into a closed Christian Free Church where he uncovers an old mosaic of father Abraham. Abraham is a grounding figure in all three religions that are collectively called Abrahamic religions. This model of atonement throughout the series is again touched upon close to the ending of the second season. Here, the job of the agents is to protect a Catholic nun who goes by the name of Sister Abraham. This character is inspired by an actual Danish nun – Kirsten Stoffregen Pedersen – who preaches atonement between the Abrahamic religions, which goes for the character as well. At some point in the series the three agents actually end up staying in the Free Church together which symbolically and idiomatically implies that the three religions can stay *under the same roof*. Investigating a possible terror attack in Denmark, the Christian agent shows the mosaic to a Muslim woman and says: “Abraham came along”. This expression bears a double meaning: Abraham both came with the house and with all three faiths. They all have the same point of origin.

These two were my radio- and TV-examples. Before turning to my literary examples it is already possible to connect these developments to Jenks’ theory of transgression. “Transgression is”, he writes, “a deeply reflexive act of denial and affirmation” (Jenks, 2003: 2). This means that to transgress is as well a reference to the transgressed, the boundary, and through such transgression new insight, new epistemologies are gained. Basically, the transgression in crime fiction is, as it appears historically, a generic transgression:

Genres are normally enhanced and changed by fusing otherwise abnormal elements into the existing formula (Altman, 1999). However, writes Jenks, “transgression serves as an extremely sensitive vector in assessing the scope, direction and compass of any social theory” (Jenks, 2003: 2). This goes as well for popular genres that are extremely sensitive towards cultural developments: “Genres are, hence, based on socially, culturally and historically determined codes, conventions, traditions or simply contracts between sender and receiver” (Bondebjerg, 1993, p. 171). Relating the two associated spheres, culture and genre, a transgression becomes both a cultural and a generic transgression, which is reflected into a popular genre such as crime fiction. That a transgression, in Jenks’ words, is caught in the middle of denial and affirmation is then a very good example of the middle course that *The Protectors* seem to be taking between religious critique and spiritual apologetics.

### **Appropriation of popular fiction**

Now, before turning to my socio-philosophical explanations I delve into three literary examples where I detect a similar expansion of genre interest. The first example is a return to the Millennium trilogy by Stieg Larsson. As already discussed, Stieg Larsson shows a subversive interest in the role of religion in the first novel of the series. Interestingly enough, though, Danish church segregations claim evidence for an immediate continuation of their religious interest within crime fiction in general and Larsson’s novels in particular. Journalists and priests are very concerned with the relationship between crime fiction and Christianity and I have in fact been invited to theological symposiums dealing with ‘crime fiction as the biblical narrative of our time’. I do generally not profess to this Christian framing of the genre, but I find an interest in the fact that Christian segregations actually *try* to claim motivation for the generic expansion<sup>2</sup>. One interesting example of this is the article “The perfect victim” by the theologians Pernille and Eyolf Østrem – the rather surprising subtitle of the article translates as “The figure of Jesus in Stieg Larsson’s trilogy about Lisbeth Salander”. The first sentence of the article reads: “On Good Friday Lisbeth Salander is crucified by the media” (Østrem, 2009, p. 9). This frame of reference entices the authors to locate a wide range of symbolic readings of Biblical appearances in the novels. Hence, for a moment I now give

the floor to the authors in order to show how they attempt to claim a religious validity in the trilogy.

In continuation of the above they write: "This media crucifixion resembles how the Pharisees and the scribes used the actual actions and statements of Jesus to distort an image of him that would help them incarcerate and convict him in favor of themselves" (ibid., p. 10). Additionally, they refer to the confrontation between Lisbeth and her father as "a mythological encounter of the devil and Jesus in the dessert" (ibid., p. 12). Nevertheless, the authors do thaw the almost one-to-one relationship between Lisbeth and Jesus in an attempt to show both likenesses and differences between the trilogy and the narratives of the New Testament – and I quote their analysis in length to show how the argument goes:

"Just to make sure: Lisbeth Salander is not Jesus. She cures her guardian Palmgren who has been disabled by a stroke. She happily socialize with sinners and the excluded whether it is the 'lesbian SM-band' *Evil Fingers*, the poor George on the island Grenada, or the socially incompatible nerds in the hacker-republic. She is omniscient (autistic), almighty, and omnipresent as long as she has an internet connection, and she has invisible powers when needed – which she uses to beat up bikers or obliterate those who step on her. / And she rises from the dead and hence definitively consolidates her similarity with Jesus." (ibid., p. 14f)

These considerations do – as it may appear – come quite close to an over-interpretation of the relationship and similarity of the narratives which may be why the authors underline the differences. And I here continue the quote:

"Despite all these parallels there are still a few missing pieces. According to the Christian doctrine about the trinity Jesus was God in human incarnation: both God and man at once, inseparable from God and the Holy Ghost as well as his human nature. / Lisbeth Salander is not Jesus Christ, the son of God, true God and true man. / She is just a true human being doing unusual things, things

close to the outer limits of human capabilities, things requesting omnipotence – this omnipotence is common for God and the author. / To put it another way: Salanders performance is so excessive that we must think of them as pure literary fiction or as an expression of something supernatural, divine.” (ibid.)

Hence, they continue to locate parallels: “The journalist Dag Svensson resembles St. John the Baptist” (ibid., p. 17). “In the trilogy, the police occupy the role played by the Romans in the gospels” (ibid.). “Mikael Blomkvist is the Peter of the Salander-trilogy, about that there is no doubt” – even though we may note that Mikael does *not* let down Lisbeth as Peter lets down Jesus. The authors of the article do, however, underline that Salander’s forgiveness is very hard to locate: “Where Jesus would say that the smallest offence needs an equal grace as the biggest, Lisbeth says that the smallest offence can and must be punished as hard as the biggest” (ibid., p. 23). The end scene in *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet’s Nest* (2007) where she nails her murderous half-brother to the floor leaving him to the vindictive bikers instead expresses a retributive eye-for-an-eye logic in contrast with the Christian ethics of turning the other cheek. As far as I can see it is very hard to determine whether or not the parallels are as obvious as the authors claim them to be. I find their analysis in a way *too* determined to cross-read the trilogy and the gospels, but I find it *very* interesting that theologians actually *attempt* this reading. This does not in itself tell us a lot about crime fiction in general or Stieg Larsson in particular, but it tells a lot about how crime fiction is appropriated by the church in order to gain a voice by way of a popular media phenomenon.

### God, one point...

I return to the relationship between media and religion later. Now, I turn to my second literary example: Håkan Nesser’s novels about the investigator Gunnar Barbarotti. Nesser’s series consists of four books so far, running from *Man Without Dog* [*Människa utan hund*] (2006) to the recent *The Lonely* [*De ensamma*] (2010). Barbarotti is a complex detective character with a firm belief in rational and empirical investigative methods, but on the side he is trying to prove or disprove the existence of God. He employs a complicated point

system where he asks God for help in personal matters. If he helps Barbarotti out God gets a certain amount of points, but if God is unable to help he subtracts points from the system. Basically, this *empirical theology* combines investigative methods with a religious interest. When we meet Barbarotti in the first novel God is ahead by an insignificant amount of points, but throughout the novels God gets ahead. Barbarotti has, though, promised himself that he would not ask God for help in his investigations, but in the second novel *A Completely Different Story* [*En helt annan historia*] (2007) – during a particularly complicated case – Barbarotti ends up asking God for help. And seems to get it! In the fourth novel *The Lonely*, then, God is up by 20 points. In this novel Barbarotti is confronted by severe personal problems and while his wife may be dying he ends up experiencing and talking to God. This ends his point system and, by now, signifies – yet with some narrative uncertainties – that Barbarotti has proven the existence of God for *himself*. Meeting God is, here, by all means an epistemological transgression for the policeman.

This experience being personal proof is important in this relation. Barbarotti is not member of a specific religious community: “I have faith”, he says. “which means that in my view there is a God. And that I have a relation to him. But I don’t think that I’m religious in the regular sense of the word” (Nesser, 2010, p. 453). Consequently, he never goes to church, but he still shows openness towards a spiritual mode of living. In the midst of the investigation in *The Lonely*, Barbarotti meets a lapsed preacher who has left the Swedish state church in order to *save* his faith. This guy talks about a God that does not live in churches, who is not contacted from the pulpit, but anyhow God is present in his life. By underlining his deinstitutionalized faith, our investigator Barbarotti recognizes this mode of faith as well. He chooses an individualistic spirituality and represents – with a phrase from Christopher Partridge – “a religio-cultural shift from organized ‘religion’ toward a more subjective form of ‘spirituality’” (Partridge, 2008: 108).

### Killer God?

My final example is A.J. Kazinski’s novel *The Last Good Man*<sup>3</sup>. Here, a Danish investigator and a Danish physicist are caught up in a mystery about a larger number of peculiar deaths around the world

where there seems to be no clues at all. At least not until they stumble across the Jewish myth describing that there are 36 good men on Earth, though if they all disappear we would reach the Apocalypse, and these good men appear to be dying. When we enter the story there are, as it appears, only two good men left – and one, an Italian policeman, dies shortly after. Various clues, then, seem to point towards our own investigator who then turns out to be no other than *the last good man* – and the guy doing all the killing seems to be a mysterious supernatural being, maybe God himself.

By the end of the novel the empirically minded couple – underlined by the fact that one is a physicist – sees their ordinary world picture crumble in favor of a supernatural explanation of existence. This is basically a reversion and a transgression of the normal narrative development of crime fiction where the supernatural may appear but only in transition until a natural explanation has been found: “as soon as the crime novel is read”, as Tzvetan Todorov writes, “it leaves no doubt that no supernatural incidents have taken place” (Todorov, 1989, p. 49). In *The Last Good Man* the natural explanation is in fact in transition until a supernatural explanation has been found. The physicist actually ends up having a near death experience and she becomes a spokesman for a negotiated version of science and spirituality: “the opposition between religion and science”, she says, “is powerfully hyped” (Kazinski, 2010, p. 240). The investigator later states: “I’m not particularly religious. For me there is a natural explanation for this”. The physicist then says: “Yes. We have found a natural explanation. We just don’t understand it yet. This is the way all new discoveries begin” (ibid., p. 356). The supernatural account, in this way, ends up being the “natural” explanation in the novel. In itself, as meeting God in Nesser’s novel, this deals theoretically with a transgression of the boundary between – as I will show underneath – a disenchanted modernity and the re-enchanted culture of post-secularity.

This ends my analytical illustrations of my argument. These examples were, though, but a pivotal excerpt of a much larger corpus of texts. You will find this tendency reflected in quite a few titles. In various ways authors reflect this cultural interest in religion, spirituality, and the supernatural – these are authors such as Arne Dahl, Gunnar Staalesen, Henning Mortensen, Tom Egeland, Johan Theorin, Camilla Läckberg, Åsa Sigurðardóttir, Peter Høeg, and Axel



Bolvig (see Hansen, 2012). They are respectively very different in how they deal with these themes, but collectively they underline a conspicuous interest in modern spirituality.

### **Mediatized religion and the post-secular**

One way of dealing with this is through what has been called *mediatized religion*. Research of a various kind shows that media play a very important role in shaping the way we think. This is characterized through the concept of *mediatization*. Gilhus and Mikaelsson (2005) talk about a flourishing interest in new religiosity on the Internet. Christopher Partridge (2008) deals with what he calls the *occultural* significance of information technology. Stig Hjarvard (2008), in a book about mediatization, calls this development *enchanted media*. Hjarvard is particularly interesting for me since he deals with *both* media and religion *and* popular genre fiction. Firstly, his research shows a massive increase of dealings with religion and the supernatural in the media throughout the past decade. Secondly, he has interviewed a number of people about their choice of genre if they were to read about “magic, spiritual or religious subjects” (Hjarvard, 2008: 199). Surprisingly, almost 28% would choose crime fiction or thrillers, which – compared with the fact that only 6% would choose horror fiction – shows that the assumed connection between modernity and crime fiction is not entirely upheld by the readers themselves.

Generally, this increased focus on religion and spirituality in Scandinavian media seems to rub off on popular genre fiction. Genres dealing with the supernatural – such as horror or fantasy – are exceptionally popular at the moment, while crime fiction increasingly operates this field. The irrational, the supernatural, the divine seems to attract more and more attention in crime fiction – the genre appears to transgress an otherwise noted boundary between rationality and supernaturality. One much more general reason for this cultural and generic development may be what has been called *self-constrained* or *post-secular* modernity. The Danish philosopher Hans-Jørgen Schanz (2008) deals with the relationship between modernity and religion, and in his view modernity and modern thinking has come to realize that it seems unable to answer all questions, questions for instance about grief, happiness, death, existence, good and evil. And because modern thinking has realized its inability to

provide sufficient solutions to these difficult questions, modernity becomes self-constrained. Being self-constrained, modernity then transgresses back into religious and spiritual thinking. Though, it is, nevertheless, still religion in an appropriate reflexive distance applied by modernity. This renewed interest in spirituality combined with reflexive criticism has been called *post-secularism* (Sigurdson, 2009). A post-secular society is a society that blends an awareness of questions of spirituality with an inclination towards reflexive critique. The prefix *post-* alone signifies that a transgression of the secular has been going on. Post-secularism has, as well, come to realize that religion has far from been removed from the public sphere, which is why this philosophical trend shows an interest in reflexive spirituality rather than institutionalized religion or hard secularism. Even Jürgen Habermas has – by way of a critique of the post-secular – underlined that secular citizens may “learn something from religious contributions”, though he is still maintaining the stanza of a political secularization of society (Habermas, 2006, p. 10). Allegedly, Habermas himself coined the term *post-secular society* (Habermas, 2001).

In other words, what I locate in Schanz’ philosophy signifies the same middle course as found in contemporary crime fiction such as especially *The Protectors* and the novels by Nesser and Kazinski. This means that if crime fiction is, at first, connected to modernity, and modernity, secondly, becomes self-constrained, the genre must as well open up towards religion and spirituality. But as we have seen in my examples from Scandinavian crime fiction, the genre does not alone apply an apologetic and dogmatic religiosity – it often places itself somewhere in the middle of a parameter between subversive critique and affirmative spirituality. The examples of subversive critique of religion from Tomas Lagerman Lundme and Stieg Larsson are alone more in line with this type of modern reason. In many ways, the new mode of post-secular spirituality is, however, reflected in an obvious and precise way in particularly Nesser’s novels about Barbarotti’s negotiations with God: God is not just a customary fact – spirituality is there to be discussed, but it is as well very present in especially *The Protectors* and Kazinski’s *The Last Good Man*.

With these analyses and this socio-philosophical background it seems suitable to discuss this genre development as *post-secular*

*crime fiction*. In coining this term, I draw heavily on John A. McClure's concept *post-secular fiction* which describes "the break with secular versions of the real". However, this "does not lead in post-secular narrative to the triumphant reappearance of a well-mapped, familiar, religious cosmos, as it often does in conventional narratives of conversion," writes McClure. "Gods appear, but not God" (McClure, 2007, p 4). In conclusion, *post-secular crime fiction is crime fiction that on the one hand deals with rational and empirical investigative methods, but combines this with a renewed interest in questions of the spirit and modern religion*.

*This is an edited version of a paper presented at the conference Stieg Larsson and Scandinavian Crime Fiction, Los Angeles, May 18-20, 2011. A shorter version was presented the 101<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting, Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study, Chicago, IL, April 28-30, 2011 (Hansen, 2011).*

## Notes

- 1 All quotes from titles in my list of references bearing a translation in brackets have been translated by me. Otherwise I quote the original version. See Hansen, 2012, for an in depth discussion of similarities and differences between metaphysics, religion, and supernaturality
- 2 See Hansen, 2012, for a discussion of the relationship between Christianity and crime fiction. This assertion has been put forward by a number of scholars, e.g. Kracauer (1971), Stephen Knight (1980), Spencer (1989), and Trond Berg Eriksen (1989).
- 3 A.J. Kazinski is a pseudonym for the film director and writer Anders Rønnow Klarlund and the writer Jacob Weinreich.

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## Ontologisk transgression i *Adaptation*

Om filmen, fiktionen, teksten og tilværelsen

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### Om at være en virkelig kliché...

"Do I have an original thought in my head? [...] Life is short. I need to make the most of it. Today is the first day of the rest of my life. I'm a walking kliché". Med disse ord starter *Adaptation* (2002).

I filmen følger vi fire personer og deres forhold til livet og skrivning. Hovedpersonen er Charlie Kaufman, der bor sammen med sin tvillingebror Donald Kaufman – begge manuskriptforfattere. Filmen handler om Charlies skriveblokada i forbindelse med adaptationen af forfatteren Susan Orleans bog *The Orchid Thief* (1998) til film. Præcis som Charlie ikke kan komme ud af sin skriveblokada, formår han heller ikke at forandre og leve sit liv. Donald derimod beslutter spontant at arbejde på et manuskript, får succes og en smuk kæreste. *The Orchid Thief* handler om Susan Orleans møde med orkidetyv og -avler John Laroche. Susan hungrer efter at forandre sit liv og føle ægte brændende passion for noget. Hun formår også kun at skrive om livet. Laroche derimod er et dybt passioneret menneske, hvis begivenhedsrige liv gøres til materiale for både en bog og en film.

Via voice-over hører vi helt i begyndelsen af *Adaptation* Kaufmans indre monolog, hvor han slår fast, at han er en omvandrende kliché – uddrag citeret ovenfor. Klichéen tematiseres således eksplicit, men som figur løber den deslige på ironisk og selvironisk vis

gennem hele filmen. Et eksempel er senere i ovennævnte voice-over, hvor det lyder fra Charlie "I need to fall in love". Hvorfor har han brug for at blive forelsket? Fordi han er hovedpersonen i en Hollywood-film naturligvis. Og ganske passende viser han sig lidt senere netop at være forelsket i Amelia. En Hollywood-film indeholder så godt som altid en kærlighedshistorie af en slags. Og her i *Adaptation* bruges denne kliché altså selvparodisk og humoristisk – og det reflekteres eksplicit af filmen selv.

Ved at indsætte sig selv som hovedperson i sit manuskript til en fiktionsfilm og ved at fremhæve klichéen i den fiktive Charlie Kaufmans indre monolog slår den empiriske Kaufman allerede her fra starten af filmen en stærk og bevidst metafiktionel modus an.

Den indledende sekvens i filmen byder også på en intertekstuel reference til *Being John Malkovich* (1999), i form af et besøg på settet under optagelserne til filmen, som Kaufman ligeledes har skrevet manuskriptet til. Sekvensen er interessant, fordi vi her både møder virkelighedens instruktør og skuespiller John Malkovich og fiktionens manuskriptforfatter Charlie Kaufman i form af skuespilleren Nicholas Cage. Hermed kolliderer den ontologiske grænse mellem fiktion og virkelighed, mellem *tekst* og *kontekst*. Ligeledes bringes *mediering* af tekst og kontekst gennem niveauskredet og selve scenen fra filmsettet på banen som et gennemgående tema i filmen. Og disse aspekter – *intertekstualitet*, *(re)mediering* og *metafiktion* er helt centrale for resten af filmen.

Jeg vil i det følgende belyse filmens transgressive praksisser via implementeringen af en arbejdstypologi over selvrefleksive metafiktionelle transgressionsformer.

### **Metafiktionelle transgressionsformer**

En fiktionsfilm består af en lang række tekstuelle niveauer. Edward Branigan skelner mellem et *diegetisk* og et *ikke-diegetisk* niveau. Diegesen er det, der sker i filmens tid og rum, som karaktererne er i stand til at opfatte; altså det implicerede rumlige, temporale og kausale system, der potentielt er tilgængeligt for, og forankret i, en given person i en film. Det ikke-diegetiske niveau er det, der kun er henvendt til publikum, som fx kapiteloverskrifter og underlægningsmusik (Branigan, 1992, s. 35). Hertil kan så føjes et ekstra-diegetisk, som er filmens kommunikative kontekst, der står i dialektisk relation til filmen. En tekst består altså af *die-*

*gese* og *ikke-dieese*, og verden i forhold til teksten kan betegnes *kontekst* eller *ekstra-dieese*.

Ove Christensen inddeler endvidere tekster ud fra deres virkelighedsaspiration, altså deres stræben i forhold til det ekstra-diegetiske niveau (Christensen i Dorfman, 2004). Han arbejder her med tre typer aspiration: assertive af 1. grad (faktatekster), 2. grad (fiktionstekster) og 3. grad (selvrefleksive tekster). Disse tre kategorier af tekster kan overlappende, hvilket sker i vidt omfang i vor tids mange hybridtekster. Selvrefleksive elementer i tekster har med en transgressiv bevægelse fra diegesen til det ikke-diegetiske og/eller det ekstra-diegetiske niveau at gøre. Betegnelsen *transgression* indikerer således, at fiktionens illusoriske niveau overskrides i en intentionel bevægelse.

Jeg vil foreslå følgende former for intentionelle selvrefleksive metafiktionsformer i fiktionelle tekster: *Intertekstuel transgression*, *Parasitær transgression*, *Æstetisk transgression*, *Pragmatisk transgression* og endelig *Ideologisk transgression*.

*Intertekstuel transgression* er en bred kategori, der dækker enhver form for intertekstuel reference fra direkte citat over diskret allusion til indskrivning i genre-, stil- og modustraditioner af alle slags. Intertekstuelle digressioner kan dermed også orientere sig mod både det diegetiske, det ikke-diegetiske og det ekstra-diegetiske niveau i en tekst.

Ved en *parasitær digression* forstås en form for tværverdslig identitet mellem en fiktiv og virkelig person, fx Napoleon, et geografisk sted, en historisk begivenhed eller lign. Lubomir Doležel er i *Heterocosmica. Fiction and Possible Worlds* (1998) inde på dette forhold. En *parasitær transgression* er konkret og refererer på én gang til diegesen og den ekstra-diegetiske omverden (Doležel, 1998, s. 18)<sup>1</sup>.

Æstetiske *transgressioner* sætter fiktionens konstruktion i fokus via en så ekspliciteret brug af fiktionelle virkemidler, at æstetikken ikke blot etablerer et fiktivt univers, men gør opmærksom på sin egen konstruktion. Oftest er de altså på én gang både medvirkende til at skabe en films illusoriske og refleksive niveau. De går fra det fiktive univers som dieese til konstruktionen af diegesen. Under denne kategori hører eksempelvis *mise-en-abyme*-figuren og særligt iøjnefaldende stiltræk af enhver slags.

*Pragmatiske transgressioner* indikerer, at filmen er bevidst om sin egen kommunikationssituation, og de retter sig mod den eks-



tra-diegetiske verden fra enten det diegetiske eller det ikke-diegetiske niveau. Eksempler kan være titelblade, særlig brug af voice-over, heterodiegetisk musik og mere eller mindre direkte seerhenvendelser.

*Ideologiske transgressioner* er ligesom de parasitære inspireret af Doležel, som anvender betegnelsen *imaging digressions*: "Imaging digressions are embedded in the fiction text but express opinions (beliefs) about the actual world. [...] The semantics of these digressions is determined by the fact that they claim validity in the actual world" (Doležel, 1998, s. 27). Ideologiske transgressioner er kendetegnet ved en vis grad af abstraktion. De er ladet med holdning, og er altså ideologiske. De både orienterer sig mod og kræver validitet i det diegetiske univers og den ekstra-diegetiske omverden. Derudover kan disse digressioner have større eller mindre rækkevidde, idet de kan have fokus på et enkelt menneske, en mindre gruppe, over en større gruppe mennesker eller forhold til hele Menneskeheden med stort M og hele verden. Ligeledes kan de være mere eller mindre alvorligt og magtpåliggende ment – altså intensiteten kan variere. De ideologiske digressioner er ofte nøgler til en teksts holdning og evt. budskab.

De fem kategorier er først og fremmest tænkt som et praktisk non-rigide arbejdsredskab til brug ved analyse af fiktionelle filmtekster. Kategorierne er ikke hinanden uafhængige, men overlapper tværtimod betydeligt i visse henseender. I forhold til *Adaptation* giver det god mening at begynde med de intertekstuelle transgressioner, fordi de er dominerende i filmen og helt centrale for en blotlægning af filmens tematik.

### Intertekstuelle transgressioner

Først og fremmest forholder *Adaptation* sig eksplicit til Orleans bog *The Orchid Thief*, som den er en adaptation og en om- / videredigtning af. Filmen tematiserer adaptationsprocessen. Referencen til *The Orchid Thief* er både til det diegetiske, det ikke-diegetiske og det ekstra-diegetiske niveau. Vægten er med hele det ene narrative spor, hvor vi følger Orlean og Laroche lagt på det diegetiske niveau, og indholdssiden af Orleans bog. Imidlertid er der lagt lige så meget vægt på det ekstra-diegetiske niveau, idet Orleans forfatterrolle tematiseres ligesom hendes (frit opdigtede) privatliv via fx den parodiske sekvens med Orlean, hendes mand og deres sofistikerede

og intellektuelle New Yorker venner drages ind i filmens diegetiske niveau. En af filmens pointer synes netop at være, at tekstens grænser flyder ud i virkeligheden, og virkeligheden ind i teksten. Biografiske facts og personer gøres kontinuerligt til fiktion i dette deliriske potpourri fra Kaufman, hvorved grænsen mellem de tre diegetiske niveauer flyder ud.

I filmen går Charlie til adaptationsopgaven fast besluttet på at være tro mod Orleans originale fortælling og stil, som han finder smuk, indsigtfuld og bevægende. Under samtalen med Valerie kalder han det for "great, sprawling New Yorker stuff", og han ytrer, han vil "lade filmen eksistere" frem for at være "kunstigt plot-dreven". Han ønsker at lave en film "bare om blomster". Imidlertid render han ind i en skriveblokada af rang, og i sin frustration citerer han senere fra en boganmeldelse af *The Orchid Thief* til sin agent: "There's not nearly enough of him to fill a book, so Orlean digresses in long passages". Blah, blah, blah. "No narrative really unites these passages". "New York Times Book Review. I can't structure this. It's that sprawling New Yorker shit".

Orienteringen mod *The Orchid Thief* fremstår altså dobbelt i filmen, idet bogens stil og struktur både hyldes og problematiseres. Det gør det svært at fastholde og gennemskue filmens holdning til Orleans bog. Forholder den sig anerkendende eller parodierende til hendes værk? Mit bud er, at den først og fremmest bruger bogen som materiale mere end den tager bogen seriøst og virkelig forholder sig til den. En holdning, der imidlertid kommer klart til udtryk i filmen, er, at adaptationer kan være kreative nyfortolkninger og udviklinger af værker. Et budskab, der står i skærende og satirisk kontrast til det gængse Hollywoods mangfoldige adaptationer, der primært er underlagt kommercielle frem for kunstneriske eller kreative ambitioner.

En anden eksplicit reference er til manuskript-guru Robert McKee, som Charlies tvillingbror Donald er inkarneret tilhænger af. Da Donald bringes til New York for at hjælpe Charlie ud af sin tiltagende og invaliderende skriveblokada, pointerer han, at han føler Charlie har overset noget – og det tør nok siges! De to brødre opdager billeder af en nøgen Orlean på Laroche's hjemmeside, og herefter går det pludselig stærkt. De opdager deres forhold og det grønne euforiserende stof, de udvinder af orkideerne. Det hele kulminerer med dem alle fire ude i sumpen, hvor Orlean insisterer på at slå Charlie

ihjel, så han ikke afslører hendes hemmelighed. Charlie lærer den "profound life lesson", at man er, hvad man elsker, og ikke, hvad der elsker en, og der bringes en deus ex machina i form af en krokodille, der pludselig dukker op, og på et øjeblik dræber Laroche. En deus ex machina er en ingrediens, som McKee på det kraftigste advarer mod at anvende. Ligeledes er vi i denne afslutningssekvens vidner til skyderier og en biljagt, der resulterer i Donalds død. Således følger vi altså udviklingen af manuskriptet fra (ønsket om) originalitet til formelagtig ploddreven kliché.

Filmen slutter med Kaufmans voice-over, mens vi ser ham i sin bil efter en frokost med Amelia, hvor han har fortalt hende, han elsker hende. Han er fyldt af håb for både sin egen personlige fremtid og for sit filmmanuskript, som han atter tager magten over, idet voice-overen, som McKee afskyr, får det sidste ord. Kaufman er bevidst om sit brud med McKee her, idet han siger: "Shit that's voice-over, McKee would not approve. [...] Oh, who cares what McKee thinks, it feel right".

Referencen til McKee er, præcis som filmens forhold til Orleans bog, svær at blive klog på. På den ene side er rettetheden klart *imod* McKee og den ploddrevne og formelagtige film, som han repræsenterer for Charlie. Charlie udtrykker dette kort og præcis ved at bruge udtrykket *modelfty*. Imidlertid følger Charlies manuskript og *Adaptation* jo en lang række af McKees principper, om end der anvendes voice-over og inkorporeres en deus ex machina. McKee både parodieres og efterleves i *Adaptation*. Selvom Charlie afslutningsvist tager kontrollen over sit manuskript tilbage, så har det jo bevæget sig fremad takket være Donald og McKee. Derfor er kommentaren om, hvem, der bekymrer sig om, hvad McKee mener, også paradoksal. I *Adaptation* er der tale om både parodi af McKee og selvparodi over brugen af hans ideer, ligesom der er tale om regulær anvendelse af en række af hans principper. En tilsvarende dobbeltpositionering ses også i filmens parasitære transgressioner.

### Parasitære transgressioner

I *Adaptation* er den fiktionelle manuskriptforfatter Charlie Kaufman, der har en pendant i virkelighedens manuskriptforfatter Charlie Kaufman, en parasitær transgression. Den fiktionelle Kaufman tematiserer, at han skriver sig selv ind i sit manuskript, og dette fremstilles som et tegn på håbløs narcissisme og selvopslugthed i den helt store stil. Det ses af Charlies ansigtsudtryk, da situationen går op for ham, og han kalder også direkte sig selv solipsistisk, narcis-

sistisk og selvopslugt. Imidlertid gør den empiriske Kaufman rent faktisk præcis det samme i *Adaptation*, som hans fiktionelle pendant i filmen gør i desperation. Selvironien og –parodien er særdeles tydelig, men også tvetydig.

Udover Charlie Kaufman kan folkene i sekvensen med scenen på settet til optagelserne af *Being John Malkovich* nævnes. Endvidere har vi forholdet mellem virkelighedens empiriske Susan Orlean og John Laroche og fiktionens. Og slutteligt kan jeg nævne forbindelsen mellem fiktionens og virkelighedens Robert Mckee, Valerie Thomas og Charles Darwin. Alle disse er eksempler på åbenlyse og intentionelle tværverdslige identiteter. Det interessante er, at der selvsagt ikke er tale om et 1:1-forhold. I stedet er der tale om de empiriske Jonze og Kaufmans frie fortolkninger og udlægninger af virkeligheden og overførsel af denne til fiktion. Der er både en tilstræbt dokumentarisme og realisme i de parasitære digressioner, der klart signalerer, at forbindelsen mellem fiktionen og verden i en vis udstrækning er biografisk. Der er dog ingen tvivl om, at fremstillingen af de fiktionelle personer både er farvet af den empiriske Kaufmans subjektive ideologiske holdninger såvel som digteriske og kreative frihed i forhold til at skabe et stykke seerværdig fiktion. Filmen placerer sig på den måde et ikke nærmere defineret sted mellem virkelighed og fiktion, og den leger konstant på kanten af den hårfine grænse mellem de to.

Et finurligt aspekt i relation hertil er den falske parasitære transgression som den fiktionelle Charlies tvillingebror Donald udgør. Den fiktionelle karakter Donald Kaufman er nævnt i credits til filmen – *in loving memory of Donald Kaufman* – og han figurerer på det udgivne manuskript – Kaufman & Kaufman, 2002. Endvidere blev han både nomineret til en Oscar og en Academy Award trods det faktum, at den empiriske Charlie Kaufman ikke har, og aldrig har haft, en tvillingebror (IMDB opslag: Donald Kaufman og Wikipedia opslag: Donald Kaufman). Sørensen betegner ham *paper author* med en term hentet fra Patrizia Waugh, og han nævner yderligere, at hverken Charlie Kaufman eller Spike Jonze klart har villet indrømme, at den fiktionelle Donald Kaufman aldrig har haft en pendant i form af en Donald Kaufman i den empiriske virkelighed (Sørensen i Nicholas & Riber Christensen, 2005, s. 65). Herved nedbrydes ikke blot ontologiske grænser på filmens indre diegetiske og det ikke-diegetiske niveau. Her går grænsenedbrydningen helt ud i

det ekstra-diegetiske niveau. Virkeligheden fiktioniseres, idet fiktionen tages for pålydende i virkeligheden. Donald findes ikke i en reel fysisk empirisk version trods det, han krediteres og efterfølgende nomineres, og sågar lever videre udenfor filmens umiddelbare rum i form af hans egen hjemmeside i Cyberspace. Et bemærkelsesværdigt fænomen – Hvor verden almindeligvis gøres til fiktion, så gøres fiktionen i tilfældet med Donald her (næsten) til virkelighed.

### Æstetiske transgressioner

*Adaptation* byder på en lang række iøjnefaldende æstetiske transgressioner. Der er betydelige skred i filmens diegetiske niveauer og vidensdistributionen påkalder sig ligeledes opmærksomhed for blot at nævne to områder. Strukturelt set er det interessante i den henseende, at seeren gennem den flerstrengede komplekse narrative struktur bringes til at reflektere over filmens struktur frem for automatisk og selvfølgelig at acceptere og forstå den – fordi den ligner de fleste andre Hollywood-films. Jeg vil endvidere fremhæve tre andre former for æstetisk transgression.

Gennem filmens første store del har historien i *The Orchid Thief* været fremstillet som afsluttet og færdig, men idet forholdet mellem Orlean og Laroche bringes ind i Kaufmans adapterende nutid, bliver historien med ét helt åben. Hermed tematiserer *Adaptation* på subtil vis, det forhold, at alle tekster er åbne størrelser, der lever videre efter, at bogen eller filmen er udgivet. En anden form for æstetisk transgression i filmen relaterer sig til brugen af voice-over. Den er et virkemiddel til at tydeliggøre de diegetiske niveauer og skiftene imellem dem i forhold til hinanden. En anden funktion voice-over'en spiller i filmen er slet og ret at pege på filmen som en konstruktion. Virkemidlet anvendes så eksplicit og hyppigt i filmen, at seeren nærmest ikke kan undgå at lægge mærke til det, hvorved illusionen brydes og refleksionen over konstruktionen uvilkårligt træder i stedet.

En anden æstetisk transgression, der skal omtales, er brugen af symboler. Det gennemgående symbol i *Adaptation* er orkideen, som for det første er halvt om halvt en parasit, idet den er fæstnet og gror på en anden plante, men får sin næring fra regnen og luften. Det er præcis som Kaufmans film gror ud ad Orleans bog, Orleans bog af Laroche's liv, mens Orlean selv på parasitær vis snylter på Laroche og hans passion. Filmen udtrykker selv dette forhold, idet Laroche

på et tidspunkt siger til Orlean, at hun er ligesom alle andre, der vil suge livet ud af ham. Et andet karakteristikum ved orkideen er, at den er utrolig villig til at adaptere til sine omgivelser. Symbolikken går altså fra natur over tekst til menneskeliv. Analogien mellem adaptation i planteverdenen og menneskeverdenen fremgår tydeligt af følgende replikudveksling mellem Orlean og Laroche:

*Laroche: "Do you know why I like plants? 'Cause they're so mutable. Adaptation is a profound process. It means you figure out how to thrive in the world"*

*Orlean: "Well it's easier for plants, I mean, they have no memory. You know, they just move on in whatever sense. To the person adapting it is almost shameful just like running away"*

Orkidesymbolet bevirker, at de tre dimensioner – natur, tekst og menneskeliv – belyser og bringes i forbindelse med hinanden i filmen. Brugen af orkideen som symbol er så ekspliciteret og tydelig, at filmen peger på sin egen brug af symbolet.

Det samme gælder for Oruborus-symbolet. Kaufman omtaler Oruborus-figuren, da Donald fortæller om sin kærestes tatovering af en slange, der bider sig selv i halen. Slangen er en mytisk figur kaldet Oruborus, og selvom den kun eksplicit optræder i den omtalte sekvens, så synes den at tjene som et symbol på filmens grundlæggende struktur og på Charlies selvopslugthed og narcissisme. Charlie kan ikke se forbi sit eget liv i sin adaptation af *The Orchid Thief*, og han investerer derfor sig selv utrolig meget i sit manuskript. Tilsvarende kan man sige om den empiriske Kaufman, at han på selvparodisk vis fremstiller sig selv som ganske og aldeles selvopslugt og navlepilende, idet han vælger med *Adaptation* at fremstille sin egen kreative adaptationsproces af Orleans bog til film, hvilket også reflekteres selvbevidst i filmen, hvor den fiktionelle Kaufman siger "I'm insane, I'm Oruborus, I've written myself into my script".

De diegetiske niveauer spejler hinanden, ligesom natur, tekst og menneskeliv gør det gennem orkideen som symbol og tematiseringen af adaptationsbegrebet. Ligeledes gør Oruborus-figuren sammen med de andre virkemidler opmærksom på denne selvspejling, og ikke mindst på den selvfordybelse og opslugelse, der ligger i spejlingen. Symbolerne står hermed som den ultimative

selvrefleksive tematisering af den struktur og de temaer, der udgør filmteksten *Adaptation*.

Imidlertid beskæftiger filmen sig også med sig selv som kommunikativ tekst, hvilket ses af dens pragmatiske transgressioner.

### Pragmatiske transgressioner

Sekvensen på settet til *Being John Malkovich* henleder seerens opmærksomhed på pragmatiske aspekter af filmskabning, idet den sætter fokus på filmens konstruerede karakter, og bringer afsender-siden i kommunikationen mellem tekst og afsender/modtager i hu.

I titelsekvensen stifter seeren bekendtskab med en sort skærm og Kaufmans voice-over, hvori han omtaler sig selv som en kliché. Dette kan ses som en formmæssig pointering af modtagersiden i kommunikationssituationen. Seeren holdes hen i en form for suspense omkring, hvem stemmen tilhører, og hvilket rum, den befinder sig i. Titelsekvensen tjener selvfølgelig det formål, at fokus er 100 % på Kaufmans voice-over, men samtidig holder den seeren hen, og man kan sige, at den er en selvbevidst ironiseren over seerens – pragmatisk set – passive og afventende rolle som modtager. Andre tydelige eksempler på pragmatiske digressioner er de små titelblade med person-, tids- og stedsangivelser, der optræder momentvis i filmen. Titelbladene er udtryk for filmens bevidsthed om dens kommunikationssituation, hvor seeren skal kunne følge med i handlingsforløbet og springene i dette.

Endelig kan filmens tematisering af medier og remediering ses som pragmatiske transgressioner. Filmene byder på utallige billedindstillinger, hvor medier af forskellig art visuelt sættes i fokus. Jeg kan i flæng nævne computere, telefoner og websider, Charlies skrivemaskine og hans diktafon, Laroches bilradio og hans lydbånd med Darwins skrifter, Kaufmans avis med fotografiet af Cornelia, hans eksemplar af *The Orchid Thief* med fotografiet af Orlean. I det hele taget optræder bøger hyppigt i billedet. Endvidere findes der utallige referencer til filmmediet i *Adaptation*. De to brøders filmmanuskripter er interessante i den sammenhæng, fordi de – fx sammen med lydbåndet af Darwins skrifter – tematiserer det vigtige aspekt ved remediering, at medierne gensidigt gør brug af og kontinuerligt opsluger hinanden. Samlet set pointerer de mange pragmatiske transgressioner selvbevidst, at filmtekster er mediebundne og indgår i kommunikationssituationer.

## Ideologiske transgressioner

Af ideologiske transgressioner er der adskillige: knyttet til fx Robert McKee, Hollywoods filmindustri, New Yorks intellektuelle miljø, Susan Orlean og Charlie selv. Alle bærer imidlertid præg af tvetydighed og ambivalens. Intentionaliteten er med andre ord ikke entydigt dette eller hint ideologiske standpunkt. Gennem sin legende brug af kliché-figuren og sin konstante parodi og selvparodi glider Kaufman mere eller mindre af på alle former for kritik, og placerer sig midt i et ironisk og selvironisk ingenmandsland.

Overordnet set tematiserer filmen – med fokus på den kreative proces fra bog til film – dialogen mellem medier og den kreative skriftproces i relation hertil. Filmen insisterer i relation hertil på en menneskelige mellemkomst mellem medieudtryk og virkelighedsindhold, mellem tekst og verden, mellem formidling af historier og mellem medier. Det fremgår af Orleans og Kaufmans fortolkende, formidlende og selvinvesterende roller. Således er vi ideologisk set langt fra Baudrillards anskuelse af verden som ren simulacrum eller for så vidt fra Julia Kristevas og Ferdinand de Saussures anskuelse af sproget som et nærmest selvkørende og selvrefererende system.

*Adaptation* er først og fremmest en underholdende, legende og selvrefleksiv film, der gennem en række forskellige strategier og virkemidler viser sin egen konstruktion og sin medialitet. Filmen tematiserer sin kreative tilblivelsesproces og herunder det i det 21-ende århundrede i stigende grad intrikate forhold mellem fiktion og virkelighed, tekst og verden.

## Noter

- 1 Betegnelsen *parasitær transgression* er løst inspireret og udsprunget af Hillis Millers essay "The Critic as Host" (1986), hvori han skriver: "Is a citation an alien parasite within the body of the main text, or is the interpretive text the parasite which surrounds and strangles the citation which is its host? [...] Or can host and parasite live happily together, in the domicile of the same text, feeding each other or sharing the food?" (Miller i Adams, 1986, s. 452). Dolezels *rigid* såvel som *non rigid designers* låner liv fra virkeligheden, som Millers tekst låner liv fra en anden tekst gennem citering, og virkeligheden ændres ligeledes gennem denne proces. Alle fiktionelle fremstillinger af Napoleon er med til at ændre og forme det ikke-fiktionelle syn på den historiske personlighed.



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## Genre transgression in interactive works

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### Method

The area of interest is genre transgression in interactive works. So far, this area of interest has been framed by the literature of Brenda Laurel (1991), Janet Murray (1997), Marie-Laure Ryan (2001), and Esben Aarseth (1997, 2005), whose important and well argued key premise is that the user is a participator of interactive works. Due to an apparent lack of scientific publication taking this key premise further into a genre discussion in more recent years, this article agrees with the above premise<sup>1</sup>.

However, in order to add a new perspective on interactive works, a new multidisciplinary framing is suggested; a disciplinary transgression between human computer interaction, scientific simulation theory, software system architecture, and basic genre theory.

The theoretical framing with academic disciplines independent of the area of interest involves lengthy explanations that go far beyond the scope of this article. Therefore, the different disciplines are introduced briefly in order to clarify the core points with regard to the area of interest and research question: What characterizes genre transgression in interactive works?

The work method of the article is to reintroduce an old established framing of basic genres (didactic, epic, and dramatic). Peter

Harms Larsen's (1990) framing is selected, briefly presented, and reframed according to the purpose of including interactive works (Rosenstand, 2002, pp. 101-108).

As it will be argued, the simulative genre can be understood as a basic genre in the same framework as a didactic, epic, and dramatic genre. Genre transgression in interactive works is discussed and exemplified, followed by a conclusion.

### **Genre framework I: Didactic, epic, and dramatic**

Peter Harms Larsen is a former teacher at the education department of the Danish National Broadcasting Company DR. In the late nineties, he developed the theory presented in the following (Larsen, 1990).

Naturally, Larsen's primary focus was on the production of TV content. However, his perspective on the production of TV content reflects a rather broad view where "somebody creates something for somebody" (translated by author) (Larsen, 1990, p. 91).

Larsen focuses on three basic genres: The dramatic, the epic and the didactic, and he terms the "somebody who creates" something the 1<sup>st</sup> person, the "somebody" who imagines something the 2<sup>nd</sup> person, and "what is put forward" the 3<sup>rd</sup> person.

In order to include a user perspective, and to bridge the gap to human computer interaction, the 1<sup>st</sup> person is termed the communicator, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person is termed situated user role, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> person is termed communicated. As it will be argued, the situated user role is a function of the relationship between the communicator and the communicated.

When defining the three basic genres, Larsen is systematic in his work about the communicator and the situated user role. However, he is less systematic in defining the communicated (Larsen, 1990, p. 92-95). In the following, as many as possible of Larsen's terms are used. The "empty" fields, however, are a contribution by the author of this article. In some cases, Larsen uses at least two terms for the same notion. For the sake of accuracy, one term is chosen for one notion in the following.

In the didactic genre, the communicator is presented as a teacher, the communicated is the matter mentioned, and the user is situated in a learner role. This article, for instance, belongs to the didactic genre.

In the epic genre, the communicator is presented as a narrator, the communicated is the told, and the user is situated in a listener role. The fairy tale “The Ugly duckling”, by Hans Christian Andersen (Andersen, 1843), serves as an example of the epic genre, when the story is told.

In the dramatic genre, the communicator is dissolved into the dramatic construction. Larsen’s solution to this is not to specify the communicator and the communicated of the dramatic genre. However, inspired by scientific simulation theory (elaborated later), the communicator is presented as dissolved into a model and the communicated is what is being modelled. As Larsen points out, the user of the dramatic genre is situated in the role of spectator. For instance, “The Ugly Duckling” staged as a play in a theatre is an example of the dramatic genre. The communicator is presented in a dissolved form as a model that consists of actors and scenography. The communicated is the play, which is modelled by a director, and the user is situated in the role of spectator.

Table 1 summarizes the genre framework inspired by Larsen. The terms marked with asterisk (\*) are by the author of this article.

Table : Larsen’s framework, where the blanks (\*) are filled in by the author of this article

Genre	The communicator*	The communicated*	Situated user role*
Didactic	Teacher	Matter mentioned	Learner*
Epic	Narrator	The told	Listener
Dramatic	Model*	The modelled*	Spectator

### Simulator and system architecture

Before characterizing the simulative genre, the core theory of scientific simulator systems is presented. Moreover, this is related to the general architecture of computer systems and its related components.

A simulator consists of a model of a bounded part of reality. The model can be influenced from the outside (input), and it will react (output) in a way that is similar to the way it is expected to react in reality (Rosenstand, 2002). This means that the model, which is the

core of a simulator, is dynamic, and the state of the simulator can change due to external influences. A model of a simulator might also change due to internal dynamics – for instance the dynamics of time, which is a special case, where steps in time are events in an “event driven simulation” (Rasmussen et al., 1995, p. 3).

A formal definition of a simulator is given by Rasmussen and Barret in their Lecture Notes “Elements of Theory of Simulation”: “A simulator is an emergence engine. It is a representational mechanism that is distinguished by its capacity to generate relations that are not explicitly encoded.” (Rasmussen et al., 1995, p. 14)

The focus is on simulators where the external influence is provided by a user; this means simulation should be framed within Human Computer Interaction (HCI). In the field of HCI, the input and output to and from a simulator is termed interactivity, where interactivity is defined as “... a measure of a media’s potential ability to let the user exert an influence on the content and /or the form of the mediated communication” (Jensen, 1998, p. 201).

The architecture of a computer system can be understood as three system components: model, interface, and functions (Mathiassen et al., 1998, pp. 13-14). The model component is a dynamic model of the problem area of the computer system; with regard to a simulator, the problem area is the bounded part of reality that is put into a model. The interface component connects the computer system to its surroundings through different interface devices. Other technical systems can be part of the surroundings also; however, this technical issue is beyond the scope of this article. The functions components represent the facilities that can be used by the surroundings

through the interface to influence the model (input), as well as the facilities that the model can use to update the interface (output). From an output perspective, the interface represents the state of the model, and from an input perspective, the state of the model is a function of the interactivity performed by the user.

Combining the core components of a computer system with scientific simulation theory results in Figure 1: Simulator.

Figure : Simulator

Simulator (The communicator)		
Interface	Functions	Model
<p>Input devices</p> <hr/> <p>output devices</p>	<p>Input facilities</p> <hr/> <p>output facilities</p>	<p>Event driven dynamics</p>

In a broader perspective, with regard to an interactive work, an event driven dynamic model of a simulator can both refer to reality – the real world – and to fiction (Rosenstand, 2002). When applying this broader perspective, we get what we term a narrative simulator.

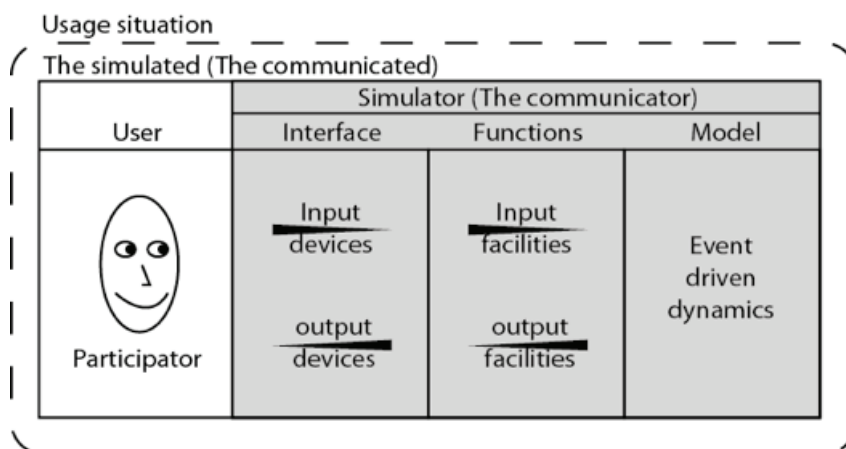
It is important that the output of a narrative simulator is similar to what is expectable in the narrative universe (the model component); but the output does not necessarily have to be similar to what is expected beforehand. In first person shooter games, such as Doom (1993), Half-Life (1998), and Damnation (2009), it is expectable to meet a monster; but the user does not know when and where to meet monsters beforehand. Actually, the expected and the expectable must differ in order to build narrative suspense in a narrative simulator. This is significant compared to simulators in general, where the model is built on a constructed reality.

To conclude, a narrative simulator is communicating a narrative of an interactive work, and according to Larsen’s framework (cf. Table 1) the simulator is the communicator. The communicator is dissolved into a simulator.

### Genre framework II: Didactic, epic, dramatic, and simulative

After characterizing the communicator as a simulator in interactive works, the next step is to characterize the communicated and the situated user role within the genre framework. This is done simply by adding the human computer interaction perspective (HCI) to Figure 1: Simulator resulting in Figure 2: The simulated.

Figure : The simulated



A user using a simulator constitutes a user experience, where the simulator is the communicator. The simulated is the communicated; and the user is a participator – the user is situated in a participant user role (cf. Method).

In Figure 2, the usage situation is marked with a dotted square with rounded corners. It is dotted to show that the boundaries of the usage situation are not distinct and usually cannot be controlled by the simulator.

The relation between simulator and the simulated leads to an extension of the genre framework (cf. Table 1), with the addition of the simulative genre. This is presented in Table 2: The simulative genre.

Table : Simulative genre

Genre	The communicator*	The communicated*	Situated user role*
Didactic	Teacher	Matters mentioned	Learner*
Epic	Narrator	The told	Listener
Dramatic	Model*	The modelled*	Spectator
Simulative	Smulator	The simulated	Participant

It is a precondition of the simulative genre that the usage situation, in relation to the simulative genre compared to the didactic, epic, and dramatic genre, involves circumstances that allow the user to interact with the system.

### Genre transgression in interactive works

As mentioned in the abstract, genre transgression between basic genres (didactic, epic and dramatic) is not a new phenomenon. For instance, it is quite common in dramatic movies with an epic voiceover – beginning and ending with the didactic credits. But as stated in the research question: What characterizes genre transgression in interactive works?

Genre transgression occurs in interactive works: Take for instance an e-learning system with interactive video, such as video sequences followed by interactive choices leading to other video sequences. An example of such an interactive video is SWIM2<sup>2</sup> developed by Aalborg University Library, where the user participates as a group

member of a study group at Aalborg University (Rosenstand et al., 2004). The plot is about making interactive choices in selecting information strategies based on discussions among the members of the study group. The premise is that the better you are at using the library's resources correctly, according to the different phases of project work, the higher mark will you get at the examination. The structure is video sequences followed by three interactive choices, where a choice leads to a new video sequence and so on.

The interactive video SWIM2 is clearly a narrative simulator and belongs to the simulative genre. However, the narrative simulator is preceded by a long introduction that establishes the narrative situation – the communicated is modelled. This is done with video without the possibility of interactivity with plot, premise, or structure. In this situation it is a dramatic genre, where the user is situated as a spectator. Furthermore, it is possible to get a short introduction to each of the group members, before the long dramatic introduction. These introductions belong to the epic genre, where a voice-over is supported with pictures. Moreover, there is an explanation of how to use SWIM2, which fits the didactic genre.



Picture : The three members of the study group in SWIM2 apart from the user as the fourth participant

From a user perspective, there is a meaningful transgression of genres in SWIM2. The user of SWIM2 is taken gently through the four basic genre formats as follows:

1. The didactic genre as a learner of the purpose of SWIM2.
2. The epic genre as a listener to a voice over about the characters of the study group.
3. The dramatic genre as a spectator to an introduction to the whole study group.
4. The simulative genre as a participator of the study group.



SWIM is clearly a hybrid genre format drawing on genre transgression, where all four basic genre formats are included. The same genre progression is also often seen in other interactive works such as games that include a didactic “how to play”, an epic “introduction”, a dramatic “start”, and then the simulative “play”. Furthermore, a dramatic “outro scene” at the end of each level is quite common, just like an epic “end” at the end of the game, ending with a didactic “list of credits”.

Sometimes the genre transgression is intervened by e.g. a didactic explanation of which button to press on the joy-pad all the while the simulative interactive work is running.

Genre transgression is as mentioned not a new phenomenon. What is new is the simulative genre, framed in the same manner as the didactic, the epic, and the dramatic genre – as a relationship between the communicator, the communicated, and the situated user role. Hence, the simulative genre reflects a genre evolution, not a genre revolution. The simulative genre is added to the other basic genres presented in this article. When viewed from a user perspective, the simulative genre can transgress seamlessly with the other genre formats, without destroying or radically changing their respective frameworks.

This genre evolution is a distinct quality of the simulative genre as it is defined in this article, because the concept of the simulative genre consequently does not presuppose a reframing of the didactic, the epic, and the dramatic genre formats.

## Conclusion

So what characterizes genre transgression in interactive works? The answer is: A situated user role shifts from participant to learner, listener or spectator, including a shift in the relationship between the communicator and the communicated – that is all! The “that is all” is actually the important point in the conclusion, because it means that the simulative genre is a basic genre on a par with the didactic, epic, and dramatic basic genres.

From a practical perspective, it means that genre transgression can be used and understood in interactive works in the same manner as in linear works such as films.

\* \* \*

Using a multidisciplinary transgression, including the perspectives of human computer interaction, scientific simulation theory, software system architecture, and basic genre theory, the simulative genre has been framed with regard to the didactic, the epic, and the dramatic genres.

This is done without radically changing the respective frameworks of the didactic, the epic, and the dramatic genres. Hence, the simulative genre is an example of genre evolution as opposed to a genre revolution that presupposes a reframing of how conventional genres are understood. Finally, it was concluded that seamless transgression, from one basic genre to another, remained intact when the simulative genre was added to the didactic, the epic, and the dramatic genre frameworks.

### Acknowledgements

Thanks to Lotte Stehouwer Øgaard, Aalborg University Library for English proof through a flexible, iterative and effective process. And thanks to anonymous reviewer for constructive feedback.

### Notes

- 1 When searching for “genre(s)” and “interactive” / “interactivities” the result is 45 peer reviewed articles. However none of them are about the transgression across the basic genres – most of the results are about e.g. E-learning, games, and interactive music as genres.  
When searching for “genre(s)” and “transgression” the result is 9 peer reviewed articles, however none of them are about interactivity.  
When searching for “genre(s)” and “participator” the result is 27 peer reviewed articles, however none of them are about interactivity.  
All the abstracts (“descriptions” in databases) have been studied, and only 3 of the 81 articles were identified as being of possible interest (Ciarlini et. al, 2009; Marian et al., 2008; Segel, 2010). However, they did not provide knowledge regarding the problem area, research question, framing, contribution, or method of this article.  
Searching for “participator” and “interactivity” results in too many search results (+ 200 peer-review articles), because the term “participator” is used in many different ways, and most articles in this search seem to be related to medical studies.
- 2 SWIM2: Stream Web-based Information Module 2:

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# Grænseoverskridende multi-protagonistfortællinger

Fra kunstfilm til Hollywood

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Her skal det handle om den såkaldte multi-protagonistfilm der, som navnet antyder, bryder med den klassiske Hollywood-fortællings skildring af den individuelle og målrettede protagonist. Formålet i denne artikel er for det første at indkredse, hvordan man kan karakterisere den nye kunstfilm med en kombination af Bordwells teorier om narration (1985, 2002) og Kovács' filmhistoriske perspektiv på kunstfilmen (2007). Dernæst karakteriseres den nye kunstfilms tre grundlæggende fortællestrategier som i høj grad 'spiller sammen' med genrefilmen: De tre strategier kan karakteriseres som den mentale film, skillevejsfilmen og multi-protagonistfilmen. I definitionen af multi-protagonistfilmen tages udgangspunkt i Azconas definition (2010) og derefter fokuseres på, hvordan multi-protagonistfilmen ikke bare er et eksempel på den nye kunstfilm – den er også en filmtype som har sit afsæt i den klassiske Hollywoodfilm. I den sidste del af artiklen anskueliggøres hvordan multi-protagonistfilmen har et ben i hver lejr: På den ene side tilhører den kunstfilmen som betoner kompleksitet og på den anden side kan den også integreres i genrefilmen. På den måde bliver multi-protagonistfilmen et godt eksempel på, hvordan en fortællestrategi både kan bryde genre-grænser og bruges på tværs af fin- og populærkultur, men som vi skal se, med flere forskellige formål.

## Kunstfilmen og genrefilm

Man kan se multi-protagonistfilmen som en del af den nyere kunstfilmtradition – en tradition hvor skellet mellem genrefilm og kunstfilm i varierende mål kan flyde sammen. Hvis man skal karakterisere kunstfilmen som genre, så kan man argumentere for at kunstfilmen kombinerer forskellige filmiske traditioner og det omfatter både den europæiske kunstfilms strategier og den amerikanske genrettradition. Denne frugtbare gensidige inspiration er et mønster, man kan følge op til i dag i, det man kan kalde, de nye kunstfilm.

Genrefilm inkorporerer kunstfilmens karakteristika på forskellig måde op igennem filmhistorien; fra horror-klassikeren *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* (1920) til 1940'erne med film noir'ens stilbevidste brug af lys og skygge og flashback narrativer som i *Double Indemnity* (1944) og *Citizen Kane* (1941). I sin kunstfilmhistorie peger Kovacs i *Screening Modernism: European art cinema, 1950-1980* (2007) også på, at det derfor giver mening at betragte kunstfilmen som en historisk filmpraksis. Kunstfilmen bliver derfor for Kovács et overstået kapitel, fordi den modernitetserfaring, han mener er på spil i filmene fra 1960'erne og 1970'erne, ikke er aktuel mere (Kovacs 2007). Men når man ser på, hvordan aktuelle kunstfilm fortæller, så vil jeg argumentere for det konstruktive i at bevare fokus på fortællestrategier og genre, frem for fastlåste filmhistoriske kategoriseringer. På den måde bliver det muligt at få øje på, hvordan de klassiske kunstfilmelementer stadig finder anvendelse. Hvis man samler Bordwells karakteristik af de narrationsnormer som karakterisere kunstfilmen, har man som udgangspunkt en prototype, som kan kombineres med forskellige genrer. Det er tydeligt, at disse strategier ikke bare har overlevet, de kommer i høj grad til udtryk og bliver fornyet. Det sker både i den europæiske og amerikanske film (men også i sydamerikansk og asiatisk film). I den nye kunstfilm er der derfor ikke tale om et radikalt brud på traditionen, men det er en udvidet anvendelse af kunstfilmens fortællestrategier som kombineres med elementer fra genrefilmen.

Genrefortolkninger kan eksempelvis også ses i den europæiske nybølge med film af både Godard og Truffaut i 1960'erne, den nye amerikanske film med Arthur Penn og Robert Altman i 1970'erne og den uafhængige film i 1990'erne med Coenbrødrene, Todd Haynes, Quentin Tarrantino og Spike Jonze. Siden 1995 har en række

film balanceret på grænsen mellem kunstfilm og mainstreamfilm som f.eks. *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), *Vanilla Sky* (2001), *Sliding Doors* (1998), *The Sixth Sense* (1999), *Fight Club* (1999), *Donnie Darko* (2001), *Inception* (2010), *Black Swan* (2010) og *Shutter Island* (2010), der alle på forskellige vis bevæger sig på tværs af genrer og kunstfilmstrategier.

### Kunstfilm som prototype

Hvilken film er prototypen på en kunstfilm? Her kan de fleste blive enige om, at Alain Renais' *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (1961) er helt central. I sin historiske definition ser Bordwell kunstfilmen som et brud med den klassiske Hollywoods normer for narration. Med andre ord, så er det med den europæiske kunstfilm, at filmen for alvor bliver moderne. I kapitlet 'Art-cinema narration' i *Narration in the Fiction Film* (1985) definerer Bordwell kunstfilmen ved at den bryder med Hollywoodnormen. Udgangspunktet for protagonisten er ofte det, som Bordwell kalder for en 'grænsesituation'. Grænsesituationen er, når protagonisten står overfor en eksistentiel krise. Ofte præsenteres forudgående hændelser til os gennem voice-over eller ved flashback som er en velkendt konvention i kunstfilm f.eks. i Bergmans *Smulltronstället* (1957).

Det er denne højere grad af ligeværdighed for den objektive og den subjektive virkelighed, som er karakteristisk og derfor bruger kunstfilmen forskellige typer af mentale processer (Branigan 1984): drømme, minder, hallucinationer, dagdrømme og fantasier. Her er fokus på karakterens problemer som f.eks. i Polanski's *Repulsion* (1965), hvor omgivelserne konstrueres som projektioner af karakterens mentale tilstand. Kunstfilmen opererer ofte med en skiften mellem en objektiv realitet og den subjektive realitet, for på den måde at kunne skildre både den ydre og den indre virkelighed. Hollywoods redundans er ikke længere tilstede, i stedet dyrkes brugen af fortællermæssige informations 'huller', som ikke nødvendigvis bliver fyldt ud (Bordwell 1985: 206) og mange af filmene har en åben slutning. Den åbne slutning er et klart brud på den ideelle Hollywoodfortælling som er struktureret kausal-logisk, motiveret og hvor ethvert set-up har pay-off. Protagonisten i kunstfilmen har ofte psykologiske problemer, manglende kommunikationsformåen eller føler sig fremmedgjort overfor omverdenen og her er forklaringen på kunstfilmens interesse for at udforske de mentale processer: Ka-

raktererne har i kunstfilmen ikke nødvendigvis de samme klare karaktertræk, motiver og mål som i den klassiske film. Hvis Hollywoodprotagonisten løber hen mod målet så slentrer kunstfilmprotagonisten stille og roligt fra sted til sted (Bordwell 1985). Det er selve udviklings eller dannelsesprocessen som prioriteres i højere grad end den målrettede søgen. Kunstfilmen vil derfor ofte have et allegorisk eller abstrakt niveau.

Man kan overordnet tale om at den nye kunstfilm som bevæger sig på grænsen mellem det smalle og det brede, samler sig i tre markante filmtyper som har det tilfælles at de tager elementer fra den prototypiske kunstfilm og giver den et genremæssigt twist: De tre typer er skillevejsfortællingen, den mentale fortælling og multi-protagonistfilmen.

### Skillevejsfortællingen

Den første filmtype er skillevejsfilmen består af to slags fortællinger. Det er især 'hvad nu hvis?' fortællingen, som defineret af Bordwell (2002) og det man kan kalde 'glimt'-fortællingen. 'Hvad nu hvis'-fortællingen er filmiske gennemspilninger af forskellige muligheder. Centrale eksempler er Kieslowskis *Przypadek* (1981), Resnais *Smoking/non-smoking* (1993) og Harold Ramis' *Groundhog Day* (1993), mens det i den nye kunstfilm primært Peter Howitt's *Sliding Doors* (1998) og Tom Tykwer's *Lola Rennt* (1998) er 'gennemspilninger' af potentielle scenarier / forskellige muligheder oplevet af den samme fiktive person. Som Bordwell også påpeger, så er der tydelig 'skiltning' undervejs i fortællingen, så vi som tilskuere ikke er på herrens mark: Fabulakonstruktionen bliver udfordret, men den er ikke umuliggjort. Den anden skillevejsfortælling er den såkaldte glimt-fortælling (Haastrup 2006). Glimt-fortællingen er som regel en erkendelsesrejse som protagonisten kommer på, hvor man kan se 'i et glimt', hvad konsekvenserne af ens handlinger bliver. Forklaringen af dette 'glimt', som i flere tilfælde udgør størsteparten af filmen, er et fantastisk element. I de nye populære kunstfilm er der en stærk genrefundering i melodramaet *The Family Man* (2000), den romantiske komedie *What Women Want* (2000), *13 going on 30* (2003), *17 again* (2009) og senest *Ghosts of Girlfriends Past* (2009). 'Hvad nu hvis?'-fortællingerne og glimt-fortællingerne har ikke åbne slutninger. De benytter det som Bordwell kalder for 'the recency effect' – den sidste af plotlinjerne er den der gælder. I 'hvad



nu hvis'-fortællingen bliver vi klogere på protagonistens potentiale, fordi vi bliver præsenteret for flere muligheder, flere fremtider. I glimt-fortællingen betones erkendelsen gennem en mental og fantastisk erkendelsesrejse, som vi følger.

### Den mentale fortælling

Den mentale film omfatter fortællinger der har selve skiftet mellem subjektive og objektive virkelighedsniveauer som omdrejningspunkt for handlingen. I den typiske genrefilm vil overgangen mellem virkelighed og drøm, erindringen eller ønsketænkningen blive markeret f.eks. med en overtoning eller en voice-over, men i disse film er der ikke nødvendigvis et markant skift. Både M. Night Shyamalans *The Sixth Sense* (1999) og Alejandro Almenábars *The Others* (2001) er eksempler på spøgelsesgenren der på en elegant måde udnytter 'huller' i plottet. Det er protagonisternes manglende erkendelse af egen tilstand, som er det afgørende. På forskellige måder er der kausal-logiske brister som ikke bliver afklaret: Det kan være sammenglidningen af den subjektive og den objektive virkelighed i *Donnie Darko*, *Vanilla Sky*, *A Beautiful Mind*, *Pans Labyrinth*, *Black Swan* og *Shutter Island*. Erindringens niveauer og udslettelse iscenesættes i *Eternal Sunshine in a Spotless Mind* eller den manglende hukommelse i *Memento* (2000) som bliver fatal. Fælles for de mentale film er, at den kausal-logiske struktur løsnes og de fortællemæssige huller er permanente. Ligesom de objektive og de subjektive lag overlapper eller smelter sammen, både for protagonisten og for tilskueren. Pointen er, at en genre kombineres med kunsthjems mentale udforskning. I plottet er det karakterernes psykologiske tilstand som prioriteres frem for karakterernes handling.

### Multiprotagonistfilmen – en prototype

Den tredje type er multi-protagonistfilmen: Man kan grundlæggende forstå multi-protagonistfilmen som film der sætter forskelligheden i centrum, frem for det entydige perspektiv og den monolitiske verdensopfattelse (Azcona: 32-33). I multi-protagonistfilmene har karaktererne forskellige vilkår, opfattelser og personligheder og er udgangspunktet for fortællingen. Maria del Mare Azcona indkredser multi-protagonistfilmen som prototype (Azcona 2010: 32-38): Hun karakteriserer multi-protagonistfilmen med fokus på narrativ struktur, typiske temaer og stilfigurer: Multi-protagonist-

film har typisk et bredt udvalg af karakterer som er involveret i forskellige handlingstråde og disse tråde kan være helt uafhængige eller de kan krydse hinanden. Handlingstrådene kan være forbundne på forskellige måder: Det kan være historier fortalt og afsluttet den ene efter den anden, som vi kender det fra den såkaldte antologifilm f.eks. *Night on Earth* (1991) eller de kan fortælles samtidig, hvor der klippes mellem de forskellige handlinger undervejs som f.eks. *Short Cuts*. Den sidste form er langt den mest udbredte.

I multi-protagonistfilmen er der fokus på karakteren frem for handlingen. Forbindelsen mellem karaktererne kan tilskrives tilfældighed, skæbne som f.eks. i *Magnolia* (1999) eller det er en familie eller en vennekreds som f.eks. *Hannah and her Sisters* (1984). Forbindelsen mellem de forskellige protagonister skabes f.eks. ved brug af samtidighed og at understrege, hvordan vi alle er forbundne som f.eks. i *Crash*. Her påpeger Bordwell i *The Way Hollywood Tells It* (Bordwell 2006: 98 + 103) også i sin karakteristik af multiprotagonist-film, at man kan forstå de komplekse sammenhænge som en logik: f.eks. sommerfugleeffekten og den populærkulturelle 'six degrees of separation'. Hvor sommerfugleeffekten kommer til udtryk i form af at en tilsyneladende uskyldig gave i en verdensdel kan føre tragedie og ulykke med sig i en anden (som i *Babel*). Hvor 'six degrees of separation' påpeger, at vi alle er forbundne på godt og ondt. Et godt eksempel på dette er *Traffic*, hvor narkotikahandlens magtstrukturerer og de politiske studehandler får konkrete og individuelle konsekvenser. Fokus er i multi-protagonistfilmen på parallelisme, frem for kausalitet og fremdrift og netop tilstedeværelsen af forskellige mennesketyper, livsopfattelser og sociale og kulturelle baggrunde er karakteristisk.

I den visuelle stil er det typisk at der benyttes virkemidler som forstærker paralleller og forskelle (Azcona: 38). Overblik over fortællingen etableres med oversigtsbilleder f.eks. af Los Angeles i *Short Cuts* eller af de forskellige landsdele i Sverige i *Fyra nuanser av brunt*. En mini-montage er også typisk, fordi på en effektiv måde modstiller karakterernes handlinger og situationer (Azcona: 43-44) som f.eks. i *Valentines Day*. Helt central er også brugen af prækomponeret musik der ofte bruges som tidsbillede som f.eks. i *Bobby* der foregår den dag i 1968, hvor Robert Kennedy blev myrdet

eller musikken kan understrege det tematiske som i den romantiske julefilm *Love Actually*. Voice-over benytte ofte til at sætte rammen som f.eks. i *He's just not that into you* og til at understrege kontraster og paralleller protagonisterne imellem som f.eks. i indledningen til *Magnolia* som er en tematisering af tilfældet med tre fortællinger. Det hører også med til forståelsen af multi-protagonistfilmens struktur at den også er inspireret af tv-serier genrer som sæbeoperaen, men hvor den afgørende forskel er at filmen jo ikke har den serielle udtrækning. I filmen medvirker der ofte mange store stjerner, som kan trække publikum i biografen.

### Den komplekse multi-protagonistfilm

Den komplekse multiprotagonistfortælling har i et filmhistorisk perspektiv rødder i filmklassikeren Edmund Gouldings *Grand Hotel* (1932), men indenfor den nye kunstfilm er det særligt Robert Altmans film f.eks. *Nashville* (1975), *The Wedding* (1978) og de senere *Short Cuts* (1993) og *Gosford Park* (2001). Yngre instruktører har også fundet multiprotagonistfilmen en oplagt narrativ strategi som f.eks. i P.T. Andersons *Magnolia* (1999), Darren Aranofskys *Requiem for a Dream* (2000), Paul Haggis' *Crash* (2004), Steven Soderbergs *Traffic* (2000), Tomas Alfredsons *Fyra nuanser av brunt* (2004), Erik Poppes *Hawaii, Oslo* (2004), Alejandro González Iñárritus *21 Grams* (2003) og *Babel* (2006). Både *21 Grams* og *Babel* udfordre multi-protagonistfilmens mange handlingstråde ved at bytte om på plottets kronologiske præsentation. Det bevirker i begge film, at man undervejs må korrigere de slutninger man drager og det får både en betydning for, hvordan man opfatter karaktererne og for den tematiske pointe. I *Babel* betyder den 'omvendte' kronologi f.eks. at forskelligheden bliver sat i perspektiv, fordi det bliver åbenbart at gensidig kommunikation og indsigt i hinandens livssituation er afgørende. Kunstfilmens udgangspunkt i en grænsesituation udfoldes til fulde i disse film – alle personerne befinder sig i situationer hvor katastrofen indtræffer og ændrer deres liv. På den måde gør multi-protagonistfortællingerne indenfor den nye kunstfilm både fabuladannelsen og personkarakteristikken kompleks og kommer derved også til at fortælle historier både om individuelle livskriser og om den forbundenhed som på trods af afstand og/eller manglende indsigt er så vigtig.

### **Den populære multi-protagonistfilm – katastrofer og kærlighed**

Når man undersøger, hvordan regulære genrefilm også benytte multi-protagonistfilmens strategi, er det ikke den eksistentielle krise eller grænsesituationen som er afsæt for fortællingen, men noget helt andet. To Hollywood-genrer har i de senere år taget multiprotagonistfortællingen til sig: Det er den romantiske komedie og katastrofefilm, men de bruger diversiteten på hver deres måde: *Grand Hotel* er som nævnt multi-protagonistens ur-film og man taler endda om 'grand hotel'-modellen, når man skal karakterisere karakterernes indbyrdes relation i f.eks. katastrofefilm.

### **Katastrofefilm som multi-protagonistfilm**

Katastrofefilm havde sin første storhedstid i 1970'erne med *Towering Inferno* (1974) og *The Poseidon Adventure* (1972 (remake i 2005)) og her har fortællingen netop afsæt i en bestemt lokalitet og det er den gruppe af mennesker og deres indbyrdes relationer som er i fokus. I de senere år har katastrofefilm fået en renaissance hjulpet på vej af velfungerende computergenererede special-effekter. Nu handler det ikke længere om en gruppe af mennesker som et sted bliver ramt af katastrofen, nu handler det om mennesker placeret i forskellige verdensdele. Det giver et globalt perspektiv på fortællingen og understreger multi-protagonistfilmens favorit-topos: at tilfældet står centralt. Ingen ved, hvem der bliver ramt og katastrofen skildres som uundgåelig, ikke som et resultat af en menneskelig fejl. Roland Emmerich har instrueret en række succesfulde katastrofefilm som f.eks. *Independence Day* (1996), *The Day after Tomorrow* (2004) og *2012* (2009) I disse film bruges multi-protagonistfortællingen til at demonstrere, hvordan ulykken kan ramme os alle og fremviser hvordan forskellige mennesketyper reagerer under pres. Det gælder både rumvæsners angreb i *Independence Day* og konsekvenserne af den globale opvarmning i *The Day after Tomorrow* og intet mindre end apokalypsen i *2012*.

Både science-fiction filmene *Star Wars I-VI* og fantasy-trilogien *Lord of the Rings* er også eksempler på multi-protagonistfilm, selv om de har heltefigurer som træder lidt mere frem end de øvrige. Henholdsvis Luke Skywalker og hans far Anakin (Darth Vader) i *Star Wars* og Frodo og Aragorn i *Lord of the Rings*. Den populære multi-protagonistfilm har en synlig helt i sci-fi og fantasy genrer-

nes episke fortællinger. I disse film er relationerne og magtbalancen mellem karaktererne af stor vigtighed, men det er ikke psykologiske portrætter og eksistentielle grænsesituationer som der dvæles ved. De forekommer, men det er ikke centralt i samme grad som plottets fremdrift.

### Den romantiske komedie som multi-protagonistfilm

Den romantiske multi-protagonistfilm gør op med den typiske romantiske komedie, fordi der her er mulighed for at vise et langt mere nuanceret billede af kærlighed og parforhold. Traditionelt betragtes den romantiske komedie som en forudsigelig formel: dreng møder pige, komplikationer opstår og dreng og pige finder alligevel sammen til sidst. I romantiske komedier som *When Harry Met Sally* (1989), *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993) og *You've Got M@il* (1998) fungerer karakterernes intertekstuelle genrerreferencer som en selvbevidst tydeliggørelse af genrens forudsigelighed og historie. I den romantiske multi-protagonistfilm er det muligt at nuancere fortællingen på tre centrale punkter: For det første brydes koncentrationen om den enkelte kærlighedsrelation og dermed inkluderes forskellige måder at finde sammen, at elske hinanden eller at få et forhold til at fungere. Det er tilfældet i *Valentines Day* der i høj grad fokuserer på allerede etablerede kærlighedsforhold mellem både venner og veninder, unge og gamle, heteroseksuelle og homoseksuelle, mor og barn, bedsteforældre og børnebørn.

For det andet giver denne diversitet i repræsentationen også mulighed for delvist at bryde med en anden konvention i den romantiske komedie nemlig slutningen. Slutningen i en multiprotagonistfilm behøver ikke udelukkende at være lykkelig. Et eksempel er fra *Sex and the City. The Movie* (2008), hvor Carries 'happy end' er et frieri med en blå Manolo Blahnik-sko som forlovelsesring med hilsen til Askepot, mens veninden Samanthas lykkelige slutning er at forlade sin kæreste, så hun kan blive sig selv igen.

For det tredje kan der skabes suspense i forhold til, hvem det er som får hinanden til sidst og hvem der ikke gør. Det sker f.eks. i *He's just not that into You* (2009), hvor to ægteskaber er i krise og tre singlepiger ikke kan finde en partner og til sidst, når regnskabet gøres op, ender det med ét lykkeligt ægteskab, én skilsmisse, to piger nu med partner og en enkelt som gerne vil forblive single. Med andre ord, der er flere mulige løsninger, hvilket understreger

at multi-protagonistfilmen også kan bidrage til at nuancere genrefilmens fortællestruktur. Den romantiske multi-protagonistfilm kan også ses som en nødvendig fornyelse for en genre som på den ene side er en nutidsgenre som repræsenterer gældende normer, traditioner og ritualer og på den anden side et forudsigeligt plot. I den romantiske multi-protagonistfilm kan man så at sige blæse og have mel i munden, fordi det er muligt at skabe spænding om udfaldet på grund af flere kærlighedsrelationer og samtidig have både en lykkelig og en ulykkelig slutning.

### **Konklusion: Komplekse film og diversitetsfortællinger**

Den nye kunstfilm har mange ansigter og er primært filmfortællinger om den menneskelige identitet, grænsesituationer og livskriser og består af tre forskellige typer: Den mentale film som f.eks. *Inception*, skillevejsfilm som f.eks. *Sliding Doors* eller *Family Man* og ikke mindst multi-protagonistfilmen. Multi-protagonistfilmen kan med fordel, som Azcona påpeger, betragtes som en prototype. Og her giver det mening at skelne mellem den komplekse multi-protagonistfilm som f.eks. *Babel* og *Fyra nuanser av brunt* overfor den populære diversitetsfortælling eksemplificeret med katastrofefilm som f.eks. *2012* og den romantiske komedie som f.eks. *Valentines Day*. I den populære diversitetsfortælling er det en pointe at nuancere, skabe spænding og give tilskueren øget mulighed for at engagere sig i de fiktive karakterer. I de komplekse fortællinger er det formålet at vise sammenhængen og relationerne på godt og ondt, f.eks. med fokus på tilfældigheden som i *Crash* eller på sommerfugleeffekten som i *Babel*.

Den grænseoverskridende multi-protagonistfilm er en funktionel prototype som giver nuancer og perspektiv – på den menneskelige eksistens i kunstfilm og i populærfortællinger om kærlighed og katastrofer. I den populære multi-protagonistfilm bliver den romantiske komedie en (mere) differentieret diagnose af kærlighed og livsstil, og i katastrofefilmen står helten ikke helt alene, når jorden forsvinder under ham, ligesom det globale perspektiv tjener til at gøre katastrofen mere dramatisk. I den klassiske kunstfilm er det kriseramte individ fortabt i en moderne verden der stiller krav, som hun eller han ikke kan leve op til. I den nye kunstfilm og særligt i multi-protagonistfilmen er det ikke bare den enkeltes historie, men flere individers skæbne og deres relationer som gen-

sidigt bliver belyst gennem kontraster eller paralleller. Flerheden af karakterer er et centralt og fornyende element både i forhold til den klassiske kunsthøj og i forhold til populærfilmen. Den grænseoverskridende multi-protagonistfilm, som eksempel på den nye kunsthøj, er grundlæggende en filmtype som afviser entydighed til fordel for flere perspektiver og bliver dermed også fortæller for mere end én forklaring på, hvordan tingene hænger sammen.

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## The Transgressive Literacy of the Comic Maidservant in Tobias Smollett's *Humphry Clinker*

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Following the eighteenth-century narrative tradition of linguistically comic servants like Henry Fielding's Mrs. Slipslop, Tobias Smollett engages with the possibilities of social ascension the literate servant represents in his servant characters' inadvertent punning. Smollett considers the literate servant, who can blur distinctions between ranks, as an unfavorable product of the increasingly commercially saturated culture of eighteenth-century Britain. The servant who can read and write is an emerging phenomenon of modernity, an actively political subject that must be suppressed to conserve distinction and social order. Considering the ethos of conservatism and polite sensibility towards the end of the period, I suggest that the novel's comic representation of servant literacy operates as an ideological mechanism that reinforces distinction.

*Humphry Clinker's* epistolary narrative comprises a range of voices in Squire Matthew Bramble's family sharing their own experiences in the family expedition through England and Scotland. Winifred Jenkins' entries have long been considered (along with her mistress, Matt's sister, Tabitha Bramble) to be the major comic relief in the novel, prone to folk expressions and mangling words that result in puns and double entendres (Lewis, 2006).

The maidservant's unwitting punning operates as the mechanism that conveys the obscene joke at her expense framed within her poor literacy. "Good puns" contain the play of sound and sense, keeping themselves within the text, yielding meanings that are additional but relevant to the word (Bates, 1999). Smollett's play with sounds strongly suggests associations that exist regardless of the sense of words, but the servant's written language challenges the neatness of such playful polysemy. Writing to fellow maidservant Mary Jones, Win confuses the proper orthographic arrangements of words for comical substitutes. "County of Killoway" becomes "cunty of Killoway" (51). The jest of the poor literacy of the servant conveys itself clearly here and poses no problems of recognition. A third meaning emerges as well and only makes sense within the social context of the "servant problem" in the eighteenth century: disobedient, intractable, and promiscuous servants who were more loyal to their purse than to their employers. Social commentators wrote frequently on the problem of servant promiscuity, seeing the proliferation of illegitimate children and venereal disease tied specifically to the ungovernable sexuality of servant women. Therefore, the signification of "county," located in a sexually charged place of the female body, the pudendum, gestures to the communal characteristic of female servant sex. The suggestion can be discerned only in the distorted orthography of the servant's limited skills in literacy. The bad spelling disturbs the neatness of the "good pun."

Ferdinand de Saussure objects to the use of punning in communication since the practice ambiguates meaning and disturbs the neat system of communication by which meaning is conveyed from speaker to listener. In his view, human society depends on this system to make us intelligible and understood (1983). The pun creates confusion and impedes understanding, an "anarchist" in challenging the stability of linguistic order. Win's written language inadvertently pokes fun at her own presumption of being literate, but in a rough sense, it also stands as a metaphor for the threat of an alternate literacy emerging from other social groups. Win speaks no gibberish here; the reader can clearly understand both her and Smollett's meaning in the punning. Even in shockingly bad writing, Win urgently promotes servant literacy to her fellow servants:

...and I pray of all love, you will mind your vriting and your spilling; for craving your pardon, Molly, it made me suet to disseyffer your last scrabble, which was delivered by the hind at Bath – O! voman! voman! if thou had'st but the least consumption of what pleasure we scullers have, when we can cunster the crabbidst buck off hand, and spell the ethnitch vords without lucking at the primmer (124).

A proud servant “sculler,” Win places importance in intuitive literacy for her fellow servants. But the substitution of “sculler” for “scholar” collapses the degree of seriousness inhabited in the word, mocking the very concept of a learned kitchen maid by linking the malapropism with lower-class labor. Though visually comical in its flagrant errors, the presence of servant writing in the novel acknowledges the existence of such a literacy within more traditional forms of communication found in Jerry's, Lydia's and Matt's letters. This kind of writing, a language that seems out of control from its unintelligibility, muscles its way into more dominant forms of writing. The effect is not just bad writing that is funny to the literate eye: it is precisely in the bad writing where the pun is located. Erroneous spelling in the punning makes these meanings structurally compatible and available to the reader.

Within the narrative's official linguistic norms, the disruptive power of Win's language ties up with lower-class sexual bodies. In this way, Smollett's representation of the maid's discourse can be characterized as carnivalesque juxtaposed with Win's fellow letter writers' general adherence to the language of sensibility. The maid's pen scribbles unsavory words that call attention to the body, marking her language as a violation of social acceptability. The discourse of sensibility, like all discursive formations, operates by rules of exclusion, and the puns in her language, only recognizable to others, averts the power her literacy seems to promise. Smollett channels the unconscious drives of sex and aggression through a character whose subaltern condition not only makes this language permissible, but perhaps urgent. In other words, the author *must* depict the lower class writer's language to be erroneous and distasteful to insist on the importance of *difference* in the face of major cultural change that working-class literacy poses. But, as a “trans-

gressive" language, Win's letters act as a challenge to the existing dominant forms of writing in the novel, especially since her writing is still coherent: we can still understand her, notwithstanding the flagrant errors in syntax and mechanics.

Smollett's use of the pun for the servant's language achieves a number of things: First, given the aesthetic and social culture of his time, it seems "realistic" that servants should be punning. Alderson notes in his discussion of anti-punning rhetoric that this practice of wit previously enjoyed by the elite had descended to the lower orders, much to the chagrin of many eighteenth-century contemporaries (1996). A critical response to the plebeian appropriation of aristocratic emulation is Libertine humor, in which the "migration of lower-stratum disorder describes not a random zig-zag but a dialectic of emulation and expropriation: the 'mad tricks' and drinking rituals of whore and rogue circulate through an economy of representation from plebeian disorder (simulating rakish excess) to aristocratic condescension (simulating the abject with a lofty contempt for common humanity" (Turner, p. 225). Higher-ranking wits felt that those below them violated their aesthetic space with their punning, and in return, produced a discourse that attempted to maintain social difference.

Second, servants' obliviousness to their own punning creates an elitist space of the "inside joke," barring servants from entry. Because servants have a crude skill set in literacy, the novel's middling readers expected malapropisms in servant writing. Both puns and malapropisms depend on phonic interpretations of words, but only the discerning eye and ear could recover the different meanings. In another entry in *Humphry Clinker*, Win reports to her fellow maidservant Mary Jones that her gastrointestinal discomfort from a "piss of cold cuddling tart" with the other servants was palliated by Tabitha's "viol of assings" (341). Later in the letter, she dishes on Lydia's impending match with her gentleman but calls it "all suppository" (341). Considering the cultural context of these orthographic errors develops the comedy much more fully. Win keeps the company of servants who dress like "parsons of distinkson" but have nothing to eat other than dessert, exactly the kind of "Ridiculous" person Henry Fielding detested, a person who valued material and superficial trappings to survival – the ostentatious "low" person ("Preface"). She puts her "trust in the Lord" but has witch elm sown in her pet-

ticoat to ward off evil, marking her back to her lower-class place with a superstitious practice specifically tied to rural culture. Win “scorns...to exclose the secrets of the family” but gossips freely of Lydia’s scandalous amour with an actor, evoking a common complaint of servants. Several levels of comedy can be appreciated here, but only with the discerning audience, those in on the joke.

Third, writers can impose punster humor on the servants for ideological effect. Servants are, after all, ignorant and unrefined – at least, these writers make them out to be so. *Joseph Andrews*’ very own Fanny Goodwill could not read and her Christian name is suggestive of the pudendum (Rawson, 1996). As good, beautiful and kind as Fielding paints her in the novel, her name and illiteracy reminds the reader that she belongs in the lower ranks of life.

Punning servants surprised few of Smollett’s readers. In response to the popularity of punning with the lower orders, the period produced a body of antipunning rhetoric. Alexander Pope, though a punster himself, describes punning as “a contagion that first crept in amongst the First Quality, descended to their Footmen, and infused itself into their Ladies” (cited in Ault, 1935, p. 270). Alexander Hamilton, a Scottish emigré living in Maryland, laments the shift of elite punsters in James I’s reign to the dregs of society: “the only remains of [“elite” punning] are to be found scattered about in Ale-houses, Bawdy houses, Chop houses, Bethlehem Hospital, and among the black Guard boys, water men, porters, in the precincts of Wapping, the Garrets of Grubstreet...” (cited in Micklus, 1990, p. 227-228). The lower-class ignorant can easily access the pun, a mode of wit not specifically exclusive for the social and intellectual elite. Punning, thus, invites “social topsy-turveydom” for social commentators in the early part of the century. Antipunning rhetoric regulates social interaction at the public level to maintain educational and polite hierarchies (Alderson, 1996). Considering eighteenth-century regard of the pun, its ideology in confirming and crossing class lines is palpable.

Fourth, this allows writers to still touch on coarse subjects in otherwise “high” works of art without broaching social and aesthetic decorum. In polite society, especially towards the end of the century when sensitivity to tawdry subjects was becoming an identifying ethos, the pun’s capacity to verbally frame crudeness heightened its appeal. Men of wit could allude to base subjectes without

violating linguistic decorum. This play on words refined “low” comedy. This practice of linguistic framing, a sign of being “civilized,” became more relevant in the later part of the century (Bates, 1999). Unsurprisingly, Freud observes that the more obscure the joke, the more exclusive the circle of those who were “in” on the joke. Though the joke’s transparency decreases in its tempered form, its increasing opacity reinforces gender and class barriers.

Following Bourdieu’s (1977) claim that polysemy only exists in academic spaces and that puns are deliberate exploitation of polysemy, the sexually charged meanings of the puns may be accessible to a select community of readers, especially those familiar with the mottled culture of servants and sex. These readers witness the servant’s exposure through her own language. To counter the danger of the servant’s potential for social mobility through her discursive power, Smollett performs a linguistic act of sexual aggression, rendering her ridiculous exemplified in her written campaign for servant literacy. Smollett’s very own *Critical Review* viewed reading by the lower orders as an epidemic, an immediate threat to society that needed to be quelled (Donahue, cited in Bermingham and Brewer, 1995). Though Smollett’s politics skews towards conservatism, his jokes betray an ambivalent attitude towards servant reading and servant sexuality. The joke’s deployment admits an implied sexual excitement in exposing the maid’s body. Hamilton (cited in Micklus, 1990) recognizes the stimulating nature of the pun; punning excites intellectual and somatic responses from the audience – they think about the multiple layers of the joke, discover the joke, then laugh. In placing taboo subjects like pudendas and buttocks in the servant’s mouth, the comic effect provokes both mirth and sexual excitement. Swift’s (1716) jocular *Modest Defence of Punning* points to the political nature of punning from its capacity for “ambiguous treason” (p. 4). Following this idea to an individual’s implicit allegiance to social mores, Smollett’s punning in Win’s words betrays the socially censured desire of sexual endogamy.

The servant’s posterior, both male and female, garners considerable attention in *Humphry Clinker*. Indeed, readers encounter Clinker’s rear, so shocking to the delicate sensibility of the perpetually carping Mrs. Tabitha, before the eponymous hero himself. Win notes that his skin is “as fair as alabaster,” anticipating Clinker’s origins of a higher station as Bramble’s illegitimate son at the nov-

el's conclusion (p. 93). The servant's rear-end is the butt of the joke and an instrument of the comedic plot.

In the episode immediately preceding Clinker's introduction through his rear, Winifred's rump is also, literally, the butt of the joke. Here, Jerry Bramble, Matt's nephew accompanying the family on the tour, writes of the aftermath of their overturned carriage:

When I looked into the coach, I could see nothing distinctly, but the nether end of Jenkins, who was kicking her heels and squalling with great vociferation. All of a sudden, my uncle thrust up his bare pate, and bolted through the window, as nimble as a grasshopper, having made use of poor Win's posteriors as a step to rise in his ascent (p. 91).

Here, Win's rear is not an instrument of plot – it is merely an instrument. Smollett admired the aesthetic qualities of a well-proportioned female bottom, evidenced by his reaction to the Medici Venus in *Travels Through France and Italy* (1766): “Heavens! what a beautiful back! the loins, with what exuberance they fill the grasp! how finely are the swelling buttocks rounded, neither too thinly cleaving to the bone, nor effused into a huge mass of flabby inconsistency!” (p. 236). However, the comedy of the episode locates itself in the innovative *use* of Winifred's rump, rather than to its loveliness. The joke is class-based; the elite make use of their servants to ascend and maintain their social position. The coupling of dissimilar things (butt/step) reduces the sexual appeal of a common erogenous space on the female body, thereby making the body appear ridiculous rather than attractive. Yet, considering how much Smollett appreciates this part of the female, an ambivalence of the joke's effect arises. In drawing the reader's attention to a sexualized site of the female body, Smollett compels the reader to imagine that part of the body with him in a confederate act of sexual aggression. This point is speculative, but nonetheless invites inquiry of why the motif of exposure is an agent in the comic tradition. The treatment of the female plebian body in comic fiction, I contend, is a response to the “progressive” changes happening at the time: increased commercialization and an expanded marketplace, technological innovation and higher incomes that decreased

the gap between classes. The obscene joke is rooted in an enforced nostalgia that desires to transpose difference from rank to biological difference. It seeks to recover distinction.



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## Food for thought

### Cannibalistic translation in the Lestrygonians episode of James Joyce's *Ulysses*

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The idiom in the title of this essay – ‘food for thought’ - is here to be understood both literally and figuratively. It is to be understood literally because Leopold Bloom’s thoughts in Lestrygonians are visibly about food, but it is also to be grasped figuratively as the objects of his thoughts give rise to serious considerations of so much more than food, notably the conception of cultural cannibalism - which is a thought-provoking kind of cultural transgression. In the following I shall give a detailed explanation of this contention.

The entire episode of Lestrygonians is famous for its interconnected puns, images and associative reflections on the similarities between human savagery, cannibalism and degeneration on the one hand, and cultural control, Roman Catholic transubstantiation and death on the other hand. One example is found half-way through the episode where Bloom enters the Burton restaurant. Here Bloom is faced with a scenario of animalistic “dirty eaters” (U 8.696) who not only represent the Dubliners’ primitive instinct for survival, but also represent their intellectual and emotional paralysis:

Perched on high stools by the bar, hats shoved back, at the tables calling for more bread no charge, swilling wolfing

gobfals of sloppy food, their eyes bulging, wiping wetted moustaches. A pallid suetfaced young man polished his numbler knife fork and spoon with his napkin. New set of microbes. A man with an infant's saucestained napkin tucked round him shovelled gurgling soup down his gullet. A man spitting back on his plate: halfmasticated gristle: gums: no teeth to chewchewchew it [...] Am I like that? See ourselves as others see us. Hungry man is an angry man (U 8.653-63).

Further on we are increasingly startled and repulsed by the many vivid and highly complex images of human consumption of both animal and human flesh and blood, which are strikingly topped with further allusions to sexual consumption. This passage, which takes place in Davy Byrnes' Pub, says it all:

Cannibals would with lemon and rice. White missionary too salty. Like pickled pork. Expect the chief consumes the parts of honour. Ought to be tough from exercise. His wives in a row to watch the effect. *There was a right royal old nigger. Who ate or something the somethings of the reverend Mr MacTrigger* (U 8.745-49).

Roman Catholic missionaries, who believe in the transgressive doctrine of *the real presence* of Christ in the bread and wine offered at communion service, are too salty to swallow to cannibals. The chief cannibal, we are told, then prefers his victim's 'parts of honour', which we must assume to be either the inner organs or the genitals, which Bloom in turn assumes to be 'tough from exercise', implying sexual 'exercise'. The wives of the chief expect this saturation to have a positive effect on his sexual performance; just as Catholic transubstantiation is believed to make Christ's body and soul come alive at the Consecration of the Eucharist. These rather blasphemous "translations" of religious ideas then link up with an even nastier association, that of a limerick which reads in its totality:

There was a right royal old nigger  
Who ate the balls of Mr. MacTrigger  
His five hundred wives

Had the time of their lives  
It grew bigger and bigger and bigger (Henke 1977)

In Bloom's "dirty" mind Mr MacTrigger turns into 'the reverend' Mr MacTrigger, making him clerical or at least deserving reverence – he *does* expand his powers as it were.

Now, Bloom's mind is not only dirty. These parabolic bites of nourishing musings are encapsulated in a wider frame of cultural and social concern on Bloom's part. Immediately following the scenario of dirty eaters in Burton's restaurant is an association to 'That last pagan king of Ireland Cormac' who presumably 'choked himself at Sletty southward of the Boyne' (U 8.663-65). Bloom ponders: 'Wonder what he was eating. Something galoptious. Saint Patrick converted him to Christianity. Couldn't swallow it all however' (U 8.665-67). According to Gifford and Seidman, the reference is more likely to be to the supposed meeting between the then-high king Laeghaire and St. Patrick than to the myth about King Cormac choking on the food he ate. The legend of King Laeghaire goes that even though he did not accept the Christian conversion, the King agreed not to interfere with St. Patrick's mission: he could not 'swallow it all' – which might also, in my interpretation, refer to the Irish King's refusal to swallow the alleged flesh and blood of Christ.

The civilisation which has taken over Ireland in the wake of the Christian conversion is, it is indicated, one in which everyone fights for his or her life: 'Every fellow for his own, tooth and nail. Gulp. Grub. Gulp. Gobstuff [...] Eat or be eaten. Kill! Kill!' (U 8.701-3). This competition for survival has spread its implications like a disease into the stomachs, hearts and souls of the people in the modern city of Dublin, and Bloom feels increasingly alienated by it all:

Things go on same, day after day [...] Dignam carted off. Mina Purefoy swollen belly on a bed groaning to have a child tugged out of her. One born every second somewhere. Other dying every second. Since I fed the birds five minutes. Three hundred kicked the bucket. Other three hundred born, washing the blood off. All are washed in the blood of the lamb, bawling maaaaaa [...] Feel as if I had been eaten and spewed (U 8.477-83; 495).

Bloom's thoughts constantly circle around a comparison between pagan Irish culture and modern urban Christian civilisation based on reflections of the similarities between transubstantiation and cannibalism. The Irish pagans had to convert to Christianity, having to 'swallow it all', virtuous as well as non-virtuous values, but Christianity subsequently, it is suggested, swallows its followers in a most degrading way turning them into greedy and savage pigs who live by the motto: Eat or be eaten! And what they cannot chew, they spit out: 'A man spitting back on his plate: halfmasticated gristle' (*U* 8.659-60). This resembles in a figurative way how Bloom feels in the middle of the vast alienating city: "Feel as if I had been eaten and spewed" (*U* 8.495). This feeling may originate in the fact that Bloom is neither pagan nor Christian, but Jewish. As is demonstrated throughout *Ulysses*, the Jewish Leopold Bloom is a person the greedy and savage Dubliners cannot understand, that is "chew", so they spit him out, cast him out of their community, making him a stranger in his own country.

In the following I will analyse what happens to these ideas and features in an actual translation of *Lestrygonians* into a totally different foreign language, i.e. Danish. The texture of *Ulysses* plays with language and includes puns, ambiguities, phonetic resonances, multilingual referents, irony and parody. But how do we translate this texture - chew, swallow and transform this - into a foreign language in such a way that the target text turns into a successful cultural transgression?

### **The Danish Translations**

I am going to devote the rest of this article to a comparative analysis of a profound passage in *Lestrygonians* with the existing Danish translations. The passage includes a number of innuendos expressing the above-mentioned similarities between human savagery, cannibalism and degeneration on the one hand, and cultural control, Roman Catholic transubstantiation and death on the other hand. The passage includes a great amount of language play, puns, ambiguities, phonetic resonances, multilingual referents, irony and parody as well as the before-mentioned reference to the limerick about cannibalistic sexual consumption.

Below are Joyce's 1922 passage and the Danish translations produced by Mogens Boisen in 1949, 1970 and 1980.<sup>1</sup> The 1970 and 1980 translations are thorough revisions of the 1949 translation<sup>2</sup>:

**James Joyce 1922:**

Sardines on the shelves. Almost taste them by looking. Sandwich? Ham and his descendants mustered [mustered] and bred there. Potted meats. What is home without Plumtree's potted meat? Incomplete. What a stupid ad! Under the obituary notices they stuck it. All up a plumtree. Dignam's potted meat. Cannibals would with lemon and rice. White missionary too salty. Like pickled pork. Expect the chief consumes the parts of honor. Ought to be tough from exercise. His wives in a row to watch the effect. *There was a right royal old nigger. Who ate or something the somethings of the reverend Mr Mac-Trigger.* With it an abode of bliss. Lord knows what concoction. Cauls mouldy tripes windpipes faked and minced up. Puzzle find the meat. Kosher. No meat and milk together. Hygiene that was what they call now. Yom Kippur fast spring cleaning of inside. Peace and war depend on some fellow's digestion. Religions. Christmas turkeys and geese. Slaughter of innocents. Eat drink and be merry. Then casual wards full after. Heads bandaged. Cheese digests all but itself. Mity cheese (*U* 1922: 8.741-

**Mogens Boisen 1949:**

Sardiner på hylderne. Kan næsten smage dem ved synet. Sandwich? Hele familien Skinke paa række og geled. Daasemad. Hvad er konen uden Plumtree's daasemad? Aldrig glad. Sikken en dum annonce! De satte den op under dødsannoncerne. Helt i skoven. Dignam's daasekød. Godt for kannibaler med citron og ris. Hvid missionær for salt. Ligesom røget flæsk. Høvdingen æder sikkert de fornemste stykker. Maa nok være sejge af brugen. Hans koner sidder paa stribe for at iagttage virkningen. *There was a right royal old nigger. Who ate or something the somethings of the reverend Mr MacTrigger.* Med den jubler hun af fryd. Guderne maa vide, hvad der er i. Livmoder, ra-

adnende tarme luftrør hakkes fint og blandes. Vanskeligt at finde kødet. Koscher. Ikke kød og mælk sammen. Det er dét, der nu kaldes hygiejne. Jôm Kippur fasten indvendig forårsrensning. Fred og krig beror paa en eller anden fyrs fordøjelse. Religioner. Julekalkuner og gæs. Drab på uskyldige. Spis, drik og vær glad. Skadestuerne fulde bagefter. Indbundne hoveder. Ost fordøjer alt undtagen sig selv. Stærk ost (*U* 1949: 178).<sup>3</sup>

#### **Mogens Boisen 1970:**

Sardiner på hylderne. Kan næsten smage dem ved synet. Sandwich? Hele familien. Kam og Skink på række og gelled. Dåsekød. Hvad er hjemmet uden Plumtree's dåsekød? Stedt i nød. Sikken en dum annonce. De satte den op under nekrologerne. Helt i skoven. Dignam's dåsekød. Godt for kannibaler med citron og ris. Hvid missionær for salt. Ligesom røget flæsk. Høvdingen æder sikkert de fornemste stykker. Må nok være sej af brugen. Hans koner sidder på stribe for at iagttage virkningen. *Der var en fornem gammel nigger, som åd en vis ting af pastor MacTrigger.* Men med – et saligt sted. Guderne må vide, hvad der er i. Livmoder, rådrende tarme luftrør hakkes fint og blandes. Vanskeligt at finde kødet. Kosher. Ikke kød og mælk sammen. Det er dét, der nu kaldes hygiejne. Jôm Kippur fasten indvendig forårsrensning. Fred og krig beror på en eller anden fyrs fordøjelse. Religioner. Julekalkuner og gæs. Drab på uskyldige. Spis, drik og vær glad. Skadestuerne fulde bagefter. Indbundne hoveder. Ost fordøjer alt undtagen sig selv. Stærk ost (*U* 1970: 166).

#### **Mogens Boisen 1980/1986:**

Sardiner på hylderne. Kan næsten smage dem ved synet. Sandwich? Hele familien. Kam og Skink på række og gelled. Dåsekød. Hvad er hustru uden Plumtree's dåsekød? Stedt i nød. Sikken en dum annonce. De satte den op under nekrologerne. Helt i skoven. Dignam's dåsekød. Godt for kannibaler med citron og ris. Hvid missionær for salt. Ligesom røget flæsk. Høvdingen æder sikkert de fornemste stykker. Må nok være sej af brugen. Hans koner sidder

på stribe for at iagttage virkningen. *Der var en fornem gammel nigger, som åd en vis ting af pastor MacTrigger.* Men med – er dagen sød. Guderne må vide, hvad der er i. Kallun, lunge, rådnende tarme luftrør hakkes fint og blandes. Vanskeligt at finde kødet. Kosher. Ikke kød og mælk sammen. Det er dét, der nu kaldes hygiejne. Jôm Kippur fasten indvendig forårsrengøring. Fred og krig beror på en eller anden fyrs fordøjelse. Religioner. Julekalkuner og gæs. Drab på uskyldige. Spis, drik og vær glad. Skadestuerne fulde bagefter. Indbundne hoveder. Ost fordøjer alt undtagen sig selv. Stærk ost (*U* 1980/1986: 206-7).

Subsequently I will extract individual lines in order to analyse them separately.

**Example 1:**

Sandwich? Ham and his descendants mustered<sup>4</sup> and bred there (1922)

Sandwich? Hele familien Skinke paa<sup>5</sup> række og geled (*U* 1949)

Sandwich? Hele familien. Kam og Skink på række og geled (*U* 1970; 1980)

In these lines Bloom speculates whether he should order a sandwich, a ham sandwich presumably. Later on we learn that he orders a sandwich with gorgonzola. But this food gives rise to the memory of a comic rhyme including several puns and language play, not least phonological resonants: 'Why should no man starve on the deserts of Arabia? / Because of the sand which is there. / How came the sandwiches there? / The tribe of Ham was bred there and mustered' (Gifford and Seidman 1988: 179). The reference to Ham combines food and the Biblical son of Noah, traditionally regarded as the father of the Negroid races (Gifford and Seidman 1988: 179).

All these complex references cannot be transferred to the Danish translation. And from a pragmatic point of view, attempting to maintain the parody of the English rhyme in a Danish text would make no sense to the Danish reader as s/he simply would not recognise it. Instead Mogens Boisen's first translation of 'Ham and his descendants' has become 'Hele familien Skinke' [The entire Ham



family], where 'Skinke' in Danish only refers to the meat, not the Biblical figure. In the subsequent translations he has changed the lines into 'Hele familien. Kam og Skink' [The entire family. Kam and Skink] where 'Kam' is a pun on both the Danish name for the Biblical Ham as well as referring to the loin of an animal. 'Skink' is a creative abbreviation of 'skinke' [pork ham] which now looks like a one-syllable name just like 'Kam'.

The wordplay of 'musterred' and 'bred' with the similar sounds of 'mustard' and 'bread' has not been rendered in Danish. Boisen translates 'musterred' into 'på række og geled' [in serried ranks] which does have military connotations, but without the mustard/ham sandwich connotations. In this way the Danish translations of these lines certainly lose the references to the old English rhyme, but they nevertheless create images of hams lined up somewhere in the pub, or just in Bloom's mind, linking up with his vision of 'sardines' lined up 'on the shelves', foreshadowing the cannibal's wives waiting 'in a row' further on.

This vision of family members with names such as 'Kam' and 'Skink' standing in a row surprisingly also concocts with the next lines in the passage:

### Example 2:

Potted meats. What is home without Plumtree's potted meat? Incomplete [...] Dignam's potted meat [...] With it an abode of bliss (*U* 1922).

Daasemad. Hvad er konen uden Plumtree's daasemad? Aldrig glad. [...] Dignam's daasekød. [...] Med den jubler hun af fryd (*U* 1949).

Dåsekød. Hvad er hjemmet uden Plumtree's dåsekød? Stedt i nød. [...] Dignam's dåsekød. [...] Men med – et saligt sted (*U* 1970).

Dåsekød. Hvad er hustru uden Plumtree's dåsekød? Stedt i nød. [...] Dignam's dåsekød. [...] Men med – er dagen sød (*U* 1980).

Here Bloom thinks about the advertisement of Plumtree's Potted Meats which has paradoxically been placed under the obituaries in the newspaper. This, then, makes Bloom link 'potted meat' with the burial of his friend Paddy Dignam earlier in the day. His corpse in the coffin obviously resembles that of 'potted meat'. After this di-

gression he returns to the last line of the jingle, 'With it an abode of bliss', which, metaphorically, again interfaces with the image of Dignam in his coffin, resting in peace. The entire passage reminds the attentive reader of the following passage in 'Hades' where Bloom wonders what the rats think of dead meat:

One of those chaps would make short work of a fellow. Pick the bones clean no matter who it was. Ordinary meat for them. A corpse is meat gone bad. Well and what's cheese? Corpse of milk. I read in that *Voyages in China* that the Chinese say a white man smells like a corpse. Cremation better. Priests dead against it (*U* 1922/1986: 6.980-85).

Bloom associatively links human corpses with eating dead meat which has gone bad. In the Dublin cemetery corpses are compared with cheese (which becomes significant in the last line of the selected passage in *Lestrygonians* where Bloom puns on the phrase 'Mity cheese') which, in turn, makes him recall that the Chinese think white man smells like a corpse. This is furthermore linked with the above-mentioned limerick in the selected passage in *Lestrygonians* where the cannibals find white missionaries too salty, 'Like pickled pork'.

The passages in *Lestrygonians* and 'Hades' create together a network of disturbing images where food, meat, cheese, milk, decomposing corpses, death, bad smells and tastes evoke thoughts of corruption and cannibalism. Ironically, the passage in 'Hades' ends by saying that Roman Catholic priests, who by implication believe in transubstantiation, are 'dead against' cremation, which would in fact put an end to such degeneration. The implication here is that the doom of the Irish is very much in the dirty hands of the priests who are thus compared with rats picking the bones of their flock.

In contrast to all this, Jewish kosher food does not bring 'milk and meat together' (*U* 1922/1986: 8.750), suggesting that Bloom's religion is free of cultural cannibalism.

In translation, this big "messy" conglomeration of images of repulsive cannibalism, cultural control and death must be preserved, or 'potted', in a new multilingual and multicultural hybrid of the source language and the target language. And this network is not to gradually decompose in the translation, but to invigorate and strengthen the target text.

Boisen first translates 'Potted meats' into 'Daasemad' [tinned food] and then 'Dåsekød' [tinned meat] getting the connotations of death right. Unfortunately the p-alliterations in 'Plumtree' and 'potted' are lost. The rhyme between 'meat' and 'Incomplete' is, however, preserved in both the early 'Daasemad' [tinned food] – 'Aldrig glad' [never happy] and in the later 'Dåsekød' [tinned meat] – 'Stedt i nød' [in distress; starving]. Even though 'Incomplete' does not refer to anyone actually starving as in the Danish translation, but to the fact that a home is really lacking something without Plumtree's potted meat, the Danish phrase successfully underscores the link to food and consumption.

Oddly enough, Boisen lingers between translating 'home' into 'konen' [the wife], 'hjemmet' [home] and 'hustru' [the wife – with a more dignified ring to it] which emphasises that it is the wife who is in distress or even starving without this amazing potted meat. In view of today's political correctness this is a somewhat chauvinist interpretation, but it miraculously ties up with the cannibal chief's wives in the limerick, waiting in line to see their husband's manhood rise to the occasion. The associations we might get of a Dublin housewife anxiously awaiting 'potted meat', perhaps ironically dragged home by her husband, are not in the least heroic, epic or in any way admirable. Potted meat, that is conserved animal corpses, or 'Cauls mouldy tripes windpipes faked and minced up', as Bloom himself gathers (*U* 1922/1986: 8.750-51), is a poor substitution for fresh quality-meat. No wonder Bloom opts for a vegetarian sandwich.

Mogens Boisen's translations of the conclusion to the ad, 'With it an abode of bliss', which reminded us of Dignam resting in peace in his coffin, turn from 'Med den jubler hun af fryd' [with this she will cry with happiness] to 'Men med – et saligt sted' [but with it, a blissful place] and finally to 'Men med – er dagen sød' [but with it, the day will be sweet]. The first translation emphasises the Dublin wife's ecstatic response to having 'potted meat', which may turn it into a sexual double entendre, I suggest, tying in with the cannibal wives' similar expectations of their husband's manly performance. The second translation, in contrast, stays very close to the original, thus focusing on the quiet bliss of a home with potted meat. The third translation, I am surprised, has turned into almost sheer nonsense as it dilutes the spunk and spice of the

above ambiguous implications. It loses the biting flavour of the original as it only stresses the meaningless jingle-like quality to the advertisement.

**Example 3:**

Cheese digests all but itself. Mity cheese (1922)

Ost fordøjer alt undtagen sig selv. Stærk ost (*U* 1949; 1970; 1980)

Unfortunately, in these lines Bloom's vegetarian cheese sandwich does not offer a fresh, uncorrupted option to the dead meat scenario above. The gorgonzola which Bloom selects is one of the most smelly cheeses one can possibly have, and the fact that it is mouldy suggests that it is both dead and alive at the same time, underscoring the themes of transubstantiation and cannibalism in *Lestrygonians*.

But what is meant by the fact that it 'digests all but itself'? Gifford and Seidman explain: 'A saying that originated in the sixteenth century. The process of making cheese was popularly regarded as a process of digestion because it involved the use of rennet, a substance derived from animal stomachs and used to curdle milk' (Gifford and Seidman 1988: 180). This means that the vegetarian cheese is in fact also corrupted by animal substances, a rennet stomach, signifying that the cheese eats itself in the making, which evokes decomposition of a corpse such as Paddy Dignam's. As we recall, in *Hades* Bloom did speculate on the nature of cheese: 'Well and what's cheese? Corpse of milk' (*U* 1922/1986: 6.982). And so the gorgonzola is both dead and alive, eating itself in the making, and decomposing, transubstantiating, when fully made.

The Danish translation of this line does not cause any trouble. But the translation of the next one, 'Mity cheese', loses all the rich ambiguities of the English expression. Gifford and Seidman explain that 'The minute cheese mite infests and "digests" cheese, leaving a brown, powdery mass of shed skins where it has traveled [*sic*]' (Gifford and Seidman 1988: 180). This may be coupled with the associations we get to rotting corpses being eaten by worms – or mites. But since Boisen's Random House edition has 'Mighty' instead of 'Mity' as in the Gabler edition, Boisen's selected adjective is 'Stærk' meaning either "strong", "hot", "sharp" or "smelly" cheese. The references to the small cheese mites thus fall away.

The phrase 'Mity cheese' in fact refers to a now vintage poster advertisement made by T. E. Stephens in 1912 with the words 'P. T. Selbit's Mighty cheese' featuring a bunch of sweating males in their shirtsleeves who try to pull apart a huge, round wheel of cheese, but have to give up. The name of P. T. Selbit refers to a great illusionist of the early twentieth century (1881-1938). I doubt that Mogens Boisen has been aware of this.

Bloom's ensuing meal consisting of a cheese sandwich and a glass of burgundy is described in ways which may evoke images of Roman Catholic communion, bringing us full circle to the opening of my article:

Mr Bloom ate his strips of sandwich, fresh clean bread, with relish of disgust pungent mustard, the feety savour of green cheese. Sips of his wine soothed his palate. Not logwood that (*U* 1922/1986: 8.818-20).

Wine soaked and softened rolled pith of bread mustard a moment mawkish cheese. Nice wine it is. (*U* 1922/1986: 8.850-51).

In the last description the influence of the wine may have begun to work on Bloom's mind as the long sentence is highly playful including lots of alliterations and assonances. The cheese is, however, still dubious as it is either described as giving rise to a 'feety savour' or as being 'mawkish' meaning either nauseating or stale. The mustard is not particularly inviting either. It is a 'relish of disgust pungent mustard' meaning a disgusting, bitter, stinging or strong-smelling relish.

It is just as distasteful as the white missionary was to the cannibals in the limerick, suggesting that the cannibalistic, Catholic feast upon Christ's body is not for Leopold Bloom. It only brings deadly mites to his body and soul. But the wine/blood, however, seems to become him well.

## Conclusion

The network of ideas which comprises Leopold Bloom's literal and figurative "food for thought" in *Lestrygonians* gives the reader a lot to chew on. The "flesh" of Bloom's reflections offers new insights

into his perception, conception and digestion of Ireland's hybrid cultural identity. The verbal "blood" that runs through these ideas, too, offers translational transfusions by way of puns, ambiguities, phonetic resonances, multilingual referents, irony and parody – not least in the overall vision of the classic *Ulysses* as an apt cannibalistic expression of the modern postcolonial condition.

This brings me to the epilogue of this study: the recent Danish translations of *Ulysses* from 1970 and 1980 are largely re-translations of the 1949 "original". This means that they are translations of a translation (the 1949 edition) of a translation (Joyce's work being a translation of Homer's *Odyssey*), suggesting that the Danish translator, Mogens Boisen, too, performs some kind of cultural cannibalism, that is, feeding on and swallowing up his own creation which, in turn, has fed on and swallowed up a number of other European creations. The actual textual result is sometimes on a par with Joyce's intended playfulness, but other times the result is famished and limp. This means that the cultural metaphor of cannibalistic translation is not only a metaphor for the individual identity, but for an entire global network of people and nations feeding on each other. As Rainer Guldin says: 'As translating cannibals we are but knots in a global net of creativity spanning many generations and vast geographical spaces constantly feeding on one another and ourselves' (Guldin 2007: 6).

Indeed food for thought. Bon appetite!

## Notes

- 1 The respective Mogens Boisen translations appeared as Joyce, James. *Ulysses* Copenhagen: Martins Forlag, 1949, 1970, and Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1980/1986. I will refer to the translations as Dn *U*, followed by the year of publication.
- 2 In my book, *Fictions of Hybridity: Translating Style in James Joyce's Ulysses* (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2007), I undertake a detailed and critical, comparative analysis of the Danish translations with the original based on a theoretical discussion of cultural, linguistic and aesthetic hybridity, Joyce's poetics of translation as exile, and the translation theorist Lawrence Venuti's terms 'domestication' and 'foreignisation' as the two most important translation strategies a translator may choose. I do not, however, address the episode of 'Lestrygonians' in this work. Other related analyses of the Danish

translations can be found in a number of articles listed in the bibliography.

- 3 It must be noted that Boisen's first translation is of the 1934 Random House edition of *Ulysses* which is full of misprints. In a preface to his 1970 translation Boisen says that during his work with this translation, he eventually managed to get a copy of the edition from 1939 which enabled him to make parallel readings of both editions, hopefully improving the whole thing (*U* 1980/1990: 10). Whenever there is a discrepancy between these editions and the Gabler edition used here, I shall make a note of it.
- 4 The 1934 Random House edition, which Boisen initially used, has "mustered".
- 5 Before 1948, the last letter of the Danish alphabet 'å' was orthographically rendered with an 'aa'. The change in 1948 was not manifested in Danish dictionaries until 1953 which explains why Boisen does not adhere to it in his 1949 edition.

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## Body Refractions

Darren Aronofsky's *Black Swan*

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Darren Aronofsky's *Black Swan* (2010) is a film which blends many different inspirations into one story. It is obvious that Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* (1877) stands at the center of the narrative structure, yet Aronofsky himself has also indicated a debt to Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Double* (1846). In addition to this, there is also a link to Michael Powell's and Emeric Pressburger's *The Red Shoes* (1948) and by extension H.C. Andersen's "De røde sko" ("The Red Shoes") (1845). What these stories all share, in different variations, is a concern with transformation. The most obvious transformation of the film, is that of Nina Sawyer (Natalie Portman) and her transformation into a woman; this transformation is one which is both generational (in that Nina becomes independent of her mother) and sexual (in that Nina finds her own sexuality).

There is another transformation, however, which is what this article will focus on and that is the transformation Nina attempts to undergo between playing the part of the Swan Queen and being the Swan Queen - expressed by herself as being perfect. I take this question of wanting to be the Swan Queen as a matter of transgressing the boundary between representation and performance. Nina is not satisfied with simply representing the Swan Queen, of appearing to be or pretending to be. Instead she must go beyond appearance and

embrace being. Nina's change into a woman is thus a transformation, while Nina becoming the Swan Queen is not simply a transformation but instead a transgression, a going beyond the realm of art. Nina's most powerful transformation is therefore her transgression of fiction into life, a transgression which is highlighted by the unstable ontological level of Nina's world throughout the film. *Black Swan* questions the notion of representation, framing it as a discussion between mirror and performance; Nina Sawyer wants to be the Black Swan, not just represent it. This leads us to another transgression, which is that of the morph. The morph is the bridge between the mirror and performance, because when Nina finally performs her role, she physically morphs into the unreal being of swan-woman hybrid, thus smashing the mirror of representation.

My understanding of transgression therefore comes primarily from Foucault's reading of Bataille in his "Preface to Transgression," where Foucault points out the centrality of the eye and sight to Bataille's notion of transgression; the eye signals inner experience (Foucault, 1998, p. 81) but at the same time the eye is also the very limit of experience, "the being of the limit" (84). To see and to be are thus central concerns for transgression, just as it is a central concern for *Black Swan*. I take Foucault's point to be that the non-transgressive eye sees the world as image, as a picture which can be controlled and disciplined by the viewing subject. Transgression would therefore be what is at the same time both invisible and beyond the visible; the transgressive eye is what turns inwards in order to be rather than to image. Transgression is therefore the opposition between image and being, in other words between representation and Being.

If we start with the mirror motif it is evident throughout the entire film; there is hardly a scene without one kind of reflecting surface. The mirror motif thus sets up two immediate areas of tension: the *Doppelgänger* motif and the split personality motif. As far as the *Doppelgänger* motif is concerned, this is established early on in the film, when we see Nina looking in the mirror and seeing someone who resembles her (same hairdo) but wearing a black coat rather than Nina's white. There is even a mirrored movement of fixing the hair, which establishes the similarity between the two, something which is played out to its full extreme when Nina gets to the dressing room. All the women there resemble each other and all are

looking in mirrors and fixing their hair the same way as Nina. With the arrival of the new member Lily (Mila Kunis), we see that there is indeed a striking resemblance between the two, physically. This is contrasted by the fact that Lily wears black, while Nina is the only one wearing white out of all the ballerinas. Even the wide shot of the dance room is a blur of gray and black outfits, Nina still wearing the only white outfit.

Lily is immediately set up as the evil Doppelgänger of Nina and Thomas Leroy, the director, praises Lily for her effortlessness and because she is “not faking it.” The rivalry set up between the two is thus a mirroring of the rivalry between Odette and Odile in Tchaikovsky’s ballet. As a contemporary tale, Lily as the black swan functions more as the temptress for white swan Nina, leading Nina to live out fantasies she has never dared act on before - their primary scene together is when Lily goes out with Nina, where they get drunk, do drugs and fuck guys. Lily’s hedonistic pursuits stand in sharp contrast to Nina’s controlled life of no ice cream, no greasy food, living instead in a state of arrested development with her mother, surrounded by baby pink pillows and stuffed animals. The contrast is glaring, almost too obvious. What clinches the Doppelgänger motif is the way it ties in with the motif of the split personality.

Central to the film’s psychological dimension is Nina’s evident instability. We get hints of Nina’s state early on, when she leaves the ballet company the first night and goes home via the subway, through a long, dark corridor. Here a woman is coming toward her and as Nina nervously glances up at the woman as she passes, we see Nina’s face on the strange woman. Immediately, the face changes back but face-changing becomes a running motif from here on. This is tied most clearly to the mirror motif when Nina and Lily end up back at Nina’s apartment. As they enter the door, we see their reflections in a kaleidoscopic mirror, emphasizing their drunken state but certainly also hinting at the slow unhinging of Nina’s mind. As they rush into Nina’s room and lock the door, one of the more controversial scenes of the film occurs as they make love. Shot primarily from Nina’s point of view with reaction shots of her enjoyment of Lily’s cunnilingus, we as spectators are drawn into the scene through close-ups of Lily’s face looking at Nina. Just before Nina’s orgasm, however, Lily’s face changes for a flash into Nina’s.

Post-coital Nina falls asleep and wakes up alone. Rushing to the rehearsal, she meets Lily who denies having spent the night. While the partying at the club is established by Lily as real, their shared sexual relationship is revealed to be a dream, nothing more than a “lezzie wet dream” according to Lily.

The Doppelgänger and the split personality is therefore two sides of the same coin, or perhaps two sides of the same mirror would be more accurate. Lily stands as Nina’s Doppelgänger because she is the mirror image of Nina’s unstable psyche; Lily simply Nina inverted. Lily is what Nina sees as the opposite of herself and so Nina sees only a reflection of her own inner desires, of the one she wishes she could be. This is Bataille’s power of the eye, for Foucault, “[t]he eye, in a philosophy of reflection, derives from its capacity to observe the power of becoming always more interior to itself.” (Foucault, 1998, p. 81) The world of ballet is set up as a world of reflection; mirrors proliferate and are everywhere. The dancers need mirrors to constitute their selves; they need the mirrors for make-up but they also need them for their dance routines, where only the mirror can reveal if their moves are correct. Mirrors are thus the ground of the image for the ballerinas, and perfection for Nina is at first achieved through the mirror, only Thomas demands more than simple representation. This artistic notion traces all the way back to Plato and its restating by M.H. Abrams in his *The Mirror and the Lamp*, where the mirror is the poor craftsman’s inferior reflection of the outside world, whereas the true artist comes from within, from an ideal or a lamp of imagination.

With all this talk of mirrors, doubles and sex, it becomes necessary to pause and discuss the notion of a psychoanalytic reading of *Black Swan*. At first, such a reading seems evident and natural: Nina, whose father we never even hear of, is trying to resolve her unconscious desires and drives by interrogating them and playing them out with her mirror-image double. This is a strategy which is well-known in classical Hollywood cinema such as precisely *The Red Shoes* which I have already pointed out that *Black Swan* draws heavily on. Maybe it is precisely the obviousness of the reading which makes me hesitate before it, for just as it is typical to see the mirror motif in classical Hollywood cinema as representing unconscious desires of the protagonist, it is also typical in film theory to see the screen as a mirror for the spectator’s identification with the protagonist.

How, then, do we identify with Nina as female protagonist? It is not as simple as it may at first appear, in large part due to the unreliability of Nina's point of view. First of all, there is certainly no Oedipal trajectory for us to rely on, for even though Nina does attempt to break free from her mother by embracing her own sexuality (bisexual, it appears), she also realigns herself with her mother's expectations of her in the final performance. We see how Nina's mother sits crying in the audience at Nina's perfect performance, achieving what the mother herself never managed and so symbolically we might argue that Nina becomes what the mother always wanted to be. Hardly the overcoming of the parent which the Oedipal trajectory signifies, nor are we left with a stable world as the film ends.

If we instead turn to the issue of scopophilia, we do indeed find a male sexual fantasy represented on the screen in the sex scene between Nina and Lily; the lesbian sex triggers the desire of the male viewer who wants to be the third party in the scene and is at least allowed in as a voyeuristic participant. But there is a problem with the scopophilic pleasure taken in the sex scene, for as it unfolds Lily's face changes into Nina's in a few flashes, which certainly distantiates us from the pleasure we might be taking in the images unfolding and upon reflection it certainly also disrupts the ease with which we may see the scene as part of our male scopophilic drive. And of course, the tryst is revealed to be precisely a fantasy - it only happened in Nina's drunken mind and the heterosexual sex which evidently took place is not shown, only the disruption of it. When Nina tells her mother that she fucked two men but we never saw that happen, is Nina lying or did we simply not see? Clearly, Nina is at this point a highly unreliable narrator so we cannot actually know and the pleasure we might derive from the sex scene is disrupted by the uncanny transformation of Lily into Nina, refusing a stable character identification and a stable plot.

For these reasons, I see the sex scene as emblematic of the film's larger structure as a house of mirrors. I have already pointed out how mirrors and reflecting surfaces occupy almost all the mise-en-scene of the film, often positioned so that we see two images of Nina. Not only does this indicate in the mise-en-scene the running theme of the entire film, but combined with the morphing faces (the girl's face in the subway corridor changing into Nina's, Lily's face chang-

ing into Nina's, Nina's face changing into Beth's and so forth), we are forced to face the fact that there is no real possibility for identification in this film. Our aligning ourselves with Nina turns out to be just as disturbing and false as taking pleasure in Lily's and Nina's sex scene. It is both necessary and impossible at the same time. The power of the film comes from this transgressive move of demanding and disrupting identification at the same time. The presence of the sex scene, located 69 minutes into the film no less, must be seen as a knowing joke on the desires of the male audience, giving them what they want but at the same time making it disturbing, uncanny and only an embarrassing wet dream.

One might argue, however, that what I have outlined above still follows a psychoanalytic understanding of desire and that even if the sex scene is narratively cast as false and only a dream, this denial still depends on the heightened significance of the scene and the spectator desire which necessarily arises, despite its ambiguous and uncanny overtones. This remains an erotic spectacle meant to convince us of the necessary sex appeal which Thomas constantly insists Nina must feel in order to present it on stage. Yet, as a false spectacle the scene remains an illusion, and "it works only if it persuades *as an illusion*, deludes; and it works only if we can see that it is an illusion, that we were deluded. The gap between the two moments, Lacan proposes, is the location of desire." (Belsey, 1994, p. 155)

Certainly the scene fulfills these two requirements, but like the rest of the film it also insists on something more than mere fantasy. Nina is not satisfied with the fantasy of sex with Lily, her desire for Lily is in essence a metaphoric substitution for Nina's desire to be the Black Swan and so Nina's desire is not based around the psychoanalytic logic of desire as lack or longing. Instead, Nina's concept of desire is a Deleuzian desire, which is founded in ascesis. Nina is nothing if not self-disciplined and locates her sense of authenticity in that very self-discipline. It is this self-discipline which drives her to desire an ability to go beyond representation, to be the Black Swan rather than a mere illusion of the Black Swan. If we briefly contrast illusion with that of realism in W.J.T. Mitchell's understanding as a matter of power, where illusion is power over the spectator and realism is power over the world (Mitchell, 1994, p. 325), this becomes a way for bringing us back to the question of

representation and performance. Nina's Deleuzian desire comes from the discipline to have power over the world, to move beyond mere illusion as the pretense of "this is the way things looks" and instead be able to assert "this is the way things are."

Identification in *Black Swan* is therefore located in desire but this desire is not that of lack or longing. It is instead a relationship of power; Nina's desire for power over the world, the spectator's desire for power over the screen based on the scopophilic urge to control the images but which becomes frustrated by the mirror motif and the banality of the images in front of us, the easy lure into male fantasy which only works as means to take power over the naive (male) spectator. Classical spectator identification becomes a trap which does not enable us to understand or properly explain the way the film structures its affect and through this affect takes control over the spectator, which is exactly its function as a body genre film as Steven Shaviro points out (Shaviro, 2011). As body genre, the film jerks at the spectator's emotions and intends to overpower the spectator, which in essence is the very opposite of classical film identification's powerful spectator in control of the images. Identification in *Black Swan* is replaced with subjection.

It is this subjection of what we can call the affective image which I regard as the transgressive moment of *Black Swan*. If we return to Foucault's and Bataille's notion of transgression, we see that it comes from the argument that transgression breaks through the image to reveal what is behind it, what is truly at stake. I will argue that we can take this in the case of *Black Swan* to be the argument of fantasy versus experience, where the sexual fantasy of Nina is not enough, it is a weak representation of the actual experience of desire which is what Nina has when she is transformed into the Black Swan. This is why Nina's very body undergoes transformations throughout the film but most explicitly during her final scene as the Black Swan. It is in this performance where Nina oversteps mere representation and fantasy and instead becomes the Black Swan in a moment of affective desire, a moment also meant to transgress the boundary between screen and spectator. We as spectators are clearly meant to be not simply shocked and startled by Nina's physical transformation but also to be elated by Nina's virtuoso performance which clearly transcends the mistake in the first act, where she falls to the floor. Furthermore, we are meant to



be jubilantly heartbroken that Nina reaches a perfect performance only to die from this very performance.

It is not an accident that Nina smashes the mirror and kills the phantasmatic Lily with a shard of the mirror. Not only is it symbolic of the way Nina rejects being bullied by her peers but it is also shows Nina's desire to smash the mirror of representation and the mirror-boundary between screen and spectator. Nina's desire is to be completely transformed into an affect image, rather than an image of representation, she wants to reach out and touch her audience in the hall and by extension us. That is why this is the emotional high point of the film, visualized by one of the moments when the film transitions to digital effects in order to morph the image beyond its representational means, to go beyond what we as spectators know is possible. There is no attempt made to explain Nina's transformation, nor any attempts made to make the clearly visual effects appear realistic; Nina looks more like a monster or a hybrid than anything like a swan or a human. The morph, then, is the opposite of the mirror in *Black Swan*, the morph is the logic which resists and rejects the mirror logic set up by classical cinema and instead brings with it a new kind of literalism, as Scott Bukatman argues, "this *becomes* that; it *takes* shape." (Bukatman, 2000, p. 240)

Morphing is thereby the ontological basis which enables this transgression beyond the image; enables the transgression because morphing always undoes its own performance. The ontological basis which I am claiming for the morph is therefore a paradoxical ontology, an ontology which is not stable or structured but instead constantly altered and in the process of becoming. It is this ontological becoming of the image which goes beyond representation in morphing and is exactly a *becoming*, a matter of being rather than appearing or resemblance. Nina smashes the mirror in an act of becoming and this becoming is expressed as morphing, it physically alters and transforms Nina from imperfect image-fantasy to perfect image-being. The image of Nina goes beyond mere representation and achieves (ideally) affect in the spectator. It is this affective morphing image which extends beyond mere illusionism into "a breakdown of the spatial boundaries that separate us and reality from the representation, perceptually collapsing the theatrical frame of the stage." (Ndalianis, 2000, p. 265) Morphing insists

that we must accept as perceptually realistic that which is referentially unreal (Ndalianis, 2000, p. 264)

We must of course keep in mind here that the cinematic images we see are illusions, no matter how realistic the digital effects are. No one believes or is expected to believe that Natalie Portman physically transformed, only that the character Nina within the diegesis does physically transform. That is why I insist first of all on the affective nature of the images and second of all point out that the images transform from celluloid to digital. In the first instance of the affective images, it is through affect that the boundaries between spectator/reality and representation are collapsed moving beyond the division which representation itself implies. That is why the affective image comes most to the fore in the digital images, because here we move beyond the idea of sign and referent because there is no profilmic event (everything in front of the camera), which allows us to realize what Deleuze and Guattari point out, that "representations are bodies, too!" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2008, p. 95) It is the representational image-body of *Black Swan* which is transformed through the morph and it is this morphing which allows the film's transgressive move beyond representation and beyond the image-fantasy of classical Hollywood cinema. Therefore, it is also no accident that the morphing which takes place is centered on the body, as the stable body has generally been the basis for a continuous sense of self. Nina, far from a stable self, is also physically fluid and so the representational image-body breaks down, something we can identify as a dominant motif in pretty much all the films which have been identified as post-cinematic by scholars such as Shaviro, Matt Hanson and David Rodowick. By transgressing the representational boundaries and recognizing that such an issue is deeply problematic in a digital age, *Black Swan* joins a growing line of post-cinematic films which may be indicative of a new emerging cinema to take its place next to the movement-image and the time-image; an image we may begin to call the morph-image.

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