

A Study of the Relationship Between the Hole and the Pole

Crystal 2011

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Material: wax, metal, plexiglass, textile, chain, photo of a dynamite explosion of the soil and glass.

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When Åsa Jungnelius examines the hole and the pole, she takes on the oldest and most archetypal archetype: metaphorically depicted and repeated regularly throughout history; in religious rituals and in popular culture, Tantra, the Kama Sutra and Playmate sharing a single orbit in the collective subconscious. The cornerstone of all reproduction, the most intelligible and the most incomprehensible, the bullet train plunging into the tunnel and the Midsummer pole driven hard into the fertile soil. Jag vill bara känna köttets lustar, höra hur du rister och frustar.[1]

In the film Barbarella[2] from 1968, Jane Fonda is strapped into the Excessive Machine. All of her senses are brutally stimulated by a man through a musical keyboard. With eyes wide, half-open mouths and heavy breath, we follow her to a symphonic, perceptually transcribed orgasm, which is consummated in a total collapse with shorted circuits and smoke. Jag vill ha din glass och du vill ha min slickepinne.[3]

With the organ as a neurological metaphor the scene represents a sexual synesthesia of sexuality. Sexuality, urges and desire diverge from the emotional and procreatively biological, shifting to an aesthetic leakage between different senses. But in the borderlands of the libido there also exist other extremes. Sexuality is both exploited and commercialised in a large-scale global industry. At the same time, society appears increasingly non-sensible, with no place for the body and sensuality. Pleasure and ecstasy can easily turn into an intolerable source of inner conflict and anxiety.[4]

Every year a dozen American men commit self-castration. When the dream and the desire for the perfect and immediate satisfaction cannot be realised, they predominantly employ kitchen utensils to free themselves from the trouble and pain. There are no official numbers for self-castration in Scandinavia; instead we have to assume that there are a number of unreported cases.

These two examples describe a series of inherent contradictions and extremes that have been implemented in the private political sphere. In a study of the hole and the pole, we are compelled implicitly to take different positions concerning order, hierarchy and power. The enormous impact of gender studies – not only in art, but – in the whole of Swedish society in the past decade is extensive.

Universities have been gender certified, FI[5] politician Gudrun Schyman has performed with burning money bills and quotas have become consensus. In short, we cannot take a neutral position in relation to a "Study of the relationship between the Hole and the Pole". And here I explore the idea that Åsa Jungnelius

actually offers a free zone by staging a wordless experiment. She gives us a title but otherwise her work is about materials, wax, metal and fabric.

The title itself acts as the carrot that dangles in front of the horse's nose. We run and run but never reach it. Suddenly Åsa Jungnelius as artist subject is transformed from standard-bearer in the neo feminist parade to the quiet genius. She dares to argue the most unthinkable: that art must be created in the mind, transported through the heart and out through the hand. Through this she undermines not only her own project but also the primacy her own interpretation. It is an unexpected and very daring decision.

Where the prevailing discourse is often based on a one-dimensional model of power structures, where certain statutory factors are given greater explanatory power than others, Åsa Jungnelius avoids linguistic straightjackets. She thereby avoids falling into a normative position in which the emphasis on dichotomies becomes dominant. Her title "The Hole and the Pole" must obviously be perceived as a pair of opposites but it does not in itself preclude an intersectional reading that allows ambivalent and multi layered interpretations. Individual units of opposites are easily transformed into angular categories without value, origin, permanence or meaning being problematized. But as Jungnelius tells it we avoid moral and political pointers. She does not seem interested in forcing her opinions on us. Instead, she pulls down our pants with a brutal honesty and stares curiously at our genitalia.

Power is multi-dimensional and simple assumptions about primacy and superiority do not allow us to penetrate its deepest mechanisms. Who is privileged can therefore not be determined by a one-dimensional understanding of power. Power infiltrates our bodies through cognitive corruption and adaptive preferences.

Chief of Police Göran Lindberg, or Kapten Klänning[6] as he has become known, has given a face to the dual nature of gender power. He devoted his professional life to reforming the police force in a feminist direction. He was a popular public speaker and connected with senior politicians. Lindberg was a driving force in raising awareness of issues of sexual harassment and violence against women. Alongside his official career he committed systematic sexual abuse. Lindberg was arrested at a petrol station in Falun in June of 2010 where he had gone to meet a 14 year-old girl. He was charged with aggravated rape, three counts of rape, one count of preparation for the aggravated rape of a minor, ten cases of procuring and seven counts of the purchase of sexual services. The handcuffs, whips and Viagra in the boot of the car belonged to the voice that spoke of equality and sex discrimination.

The interesting thing about a dual nature is that it is contained in one body, a double consciousness in one being. Robert Louis Stevenson, who was a dual character, described his different sides as "himself" and "the other". When he wrote his famous novel Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, he implied a moral dimension that relativized the notion of good and evil. This moral aspect is also found in Jung who argued that everyone carries a shadow aspect.[7] He described it as part of the unconscious, consisting of a repressed weakness or a shortcoming. Jung supposed that the depth of such a lack would intensify in relation to the degree of denial. A stronger trauma creates a stronger repressive mechanism that is the basis for a deeper darkness.

It is not particularly hard to find men defined as dual characters in the media, but there is no female equivalent of Haga-mannen[8], Kapten Klänning, Mike Tyson or Anders Behring Breivik. As it is difficult to imagine that a pathological dual nature would be something genetic, reserved only for men, we have to

imagine that the diagnosis is culturally conditioned. That does not of course mean that the hole is a simpler shape than the pole or that Ulf Lundell[9] was right when he said *Pussy should smell of pussy and not some fucking summer meadow*. The temporary relief offered by Åsa Jungnelius in her examination is based on a different logic: if there is no problem, there is no solution.

[1] "I just want to feel earthly desires, to hear how you shake and pant" – Ebba Grön "Ung och kåt"

[2] *Barbarella* was directed by Jane Fonda's husband at the time, Roger Vadim. His exploitation of her was both the end of their relationship and the beginning of Jane Fonda's involvement in politics and gender issues.

[3] I want your ice cream and you want my lollipop Latin Kings "Halva inne" from the album "Välkommen till förorten" from 1994.

[4] See David Foster Wallace's excellent essay "Big Red Son".

[5] Feministic Initiative is a Swedish association with the aim to obviate sex discrimination.

[6] The slightly ironic name "Captain Dress" has its origins in Robert Gustavsson's character in *Percy tears* (*Percy tårar*), a tv show produced by the comedy group *Killinggänget* for SVT, the national broadcaster.

[7] Jung uses the term "shadow aspect".

[8] Niklas Lingren is a convicted Swedish serial-rapist.

[9] Ulf Lundell is a popular Swedish author and musician.

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