

# Her Voices

## *Mediated Female Texts in a Cultural Perspective*

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Traditional media and communication studies are more concerned with television and newspapers and less with other media such as literature, computers or telephones. Studies of rock music and *phonogram* media are also rare within media studies, in spite of their presently important role within mass communication. My thesis (Ganetz 1997), which this article is based upon, studies a central aspect of rock music – its *lyrics* – and situates itself in the field of media and cultural studies.

Rock lyrics are *mediated communication*, symbolic expressions mediated through specific media (phonograms, as well as radio, television and video). They are also elements of popular music, which is a part of *popular culture* – a phenomenon closely connected to the rise of modernity. Popular culture can be defined as mass-produced cultural products which are used and spread among large groups of the population and which are generally classified by the dominant taste as having little value.

The popular, mediated genre called rock lyrics has a number of specific, formal traits, but its ultimate delimitation is its connection to rock music: rock lyrics do not comprise a genre of their own, but the verbal aspect of the genre rock *music*. Below, the concept ‘*rock texts*’ will be used and not the more common ‘rock lyrics’, in order to emphasize that rock texts are not a subgenre to ‘book’ poetry, they are instead, as mentioned before, the verbal side of rock music. They are ‘material for a voice’, as Lindberg (1995, p. 61) points out.

The texts analysed in the study are written by three female artists, all of them central to the world of Swedish rock music. The two main questions of the study are: *what* themes and motifs can be identified in the texts – *what* are they about? – and *why*?

In order to understand what the texts say, it is necessary to examine how they are written, i.e. the

formal structures according to which they are constructed. It is also necessary to reconstruct, through interpretive work, the *world of the text* (Ricoeur 1981), which points to the ‘real’ world outside the text. Explanations for the occurrence of certain themes and motifs in the rock texts are sought for in the *contexts* of the texts, and in particular in their *cultural context*, of which the genre of rock music itself is only one of several ingredients. This study is not in the first place a work about *rock* texts, but a qualitative study of *mediated popular texts*, written by women.

The importance of the texts varies considerably in rock music: it is possible to find both ‘rock poetry’ and texts that are clearly subordinate to the music. I have chosen to analyse texts written by three women, all of whom work or have worked as singers, instrumentalists, text writers and composers. The artists analysed are all ‘text centred’, which does not imply that they are ‘better’ or more ‘serious’ than others who are not – a value judgement that has unfortunately affected many artists in the history of rock.

*Turid Lundqvist* was born in 1949, made her debut 1971 and released five albums under her own name. It is possible to label her as a singer-songwriter, inspired by folk rock. The last album she made of her own was released in 1980.

*Eva Dahlgren* was born in 1960 and started her career in 1978. She has released thirteen albums under her own name, moving between various popular music genres including ‘mainstream’ pop, the singer-songwriter tradition, new wave, art rock and art music.

*Kajsa Grytt* was born 1961 and made her debut as singer, guitarist and text writer in the new wave-band Tant Strul (Aunt Trouble) 1980. The band released three albums and some singles. She has furthermore released two albums together with an-

other female musician and two albums as a solo artist – eight albums in all. She has also moved between different popular music genres: new wave, the singer-songwriter tradition, pop and traditional guitar rock.

The study includes 203 texts written, performed and recorded by these three women between 1971 and 1995. The lyrics are analysed at two levels: first, a *survey of main themes* within each authorship; second, and most important, *close readings of some selected song lyrics* that treat these themes in a manner that is interesting or typical for each author. Music analyses have also been conducted with the aim of discussing how the music influences an understanding of the text.

These close readings are examples of how the author in question treats a specific motif. The purpose is to analyse what the 'I' of the lyrics 'speaks' of when carried by a female voice in a musical context. Biographical data has been used very restrictively because the aim of the study is not to analyse the persons but their *work*, their texts. Four main theoretical traditions have been used in order to interpret and understand the lyrics: Cultural Studies, theories about modernity (above all those of Thomas Ziehe and Anthony Giddens), psychoanalysis (mainly drawn from Julia Kristeva) and feminist literary and media theory.

### **Aesthetic Creativity, Women and Rock**

In order to understand the themes of the texts, it is necessary to contextualize them, i.e. understand their relation to the discourses of rock and to women's aesthetic practices especially in the cultural public sphere.

In a historic perspective, religious and philosophical thinking regarding femininity and masculinity has created a cultural and social dichotomy with men, activity and the soul (or the mind) as one pole, and women, passivity and the body as the other. The latter position implicitly includes a perceived inability for aesthetic creativity. To be an author or a musician is furthermore to be a public person and the public life was something that was associated with the male sex. This division between the male public life and the female private sphere was established in the 18th century with the growth of the middle class, the bourgeoisie (Wolff 1990). This division between public and private life and the notion of woman as body, had a particular consequence for female artists. When women left their protected life in their homes to sell their products in public as authors and musicians to an

anonymous, paying audience, they were regarded as every man's women, prostitutes whose bodies were for sale.

The history of literature, music and art, gives many examples of strategies developed by women in order to practice aesthetic creativity in the public sphere without being the subject of sexual objectification. The female author could for example hide behind a male pseudonym. She could also depreciate her work in a preface saying that her work was unimportant and written without any bigger ambitions. Another strategy was working in genres with low status, such as popular literature, fairy tales or literature for children.

The problems for women active in the public sphere are still with us today, but female participation in music is today riskier than in either literature or visual arts. According to Susan McClary (1991), this can be explained by the fact that Western music is an aesthetic discourse engaging both the body and the mind, and that the composer-performer often relies heavily on manipulating audience response through his or her enactments of sexual power and desire. This is true in both classical- and popular music. A male artist is able to stage his body and sexuality and still keep his status of a subject, but the same manoeuvre is much riskier for a female artist, according to McClary: 'Women on the stage are viewed as sexual commodities, regardless of their appearance or seriousness' (McClary 1991 p. 151).

Music is also a non-verbal form of expression with strong bodily components. And it is not just the body of the artist that is involved in the expression, also the bodies of the audience are involved through the rhythm. The closeness between music and the body is maybe one reason why female singers dominate among female musicians – the lyrics are a possibility for women to 'hide' the body and emphasize the mind. But to make such a strategy successful, the female artist must have the capacity to transform the singing into an unearthly, poetic form of expression. The Swedish world famous singer Jenny Lind who lived in the 19th century, was an expert of this strategy: one of her fans wrote in the middle of the century, 'She sings like an angel and she also looks and behaves like one' (Öhrström 1987).

It is important to keep this historical background in mind when studying female cultural positions, not least female rock texts. Of course much has happened in favour of creative women, especially in literature, but in spite of all the positive changes in the 20th century concerning women's

circumstances, women generally speaking for a long time were reduced to only two positions in the world of rock – ‘the rock whore and the (folksong) virgin’ as the 1972 conference ‘Women in Rock’ arranged by *Melody Maker* put it (Steward & Garratt 1984). In other words, women are either body or mind, to be both is reserved for men since being both implies a full subject-status from which women were effectively excluded. But in the 90s a change has taken place, also in the discourse of rock: in the 1980s there has been a tendency among female rock musicians – with the artist Madonna as a precursor – to unite soul and body, mind and sexuality, which has created a new group of female rock musicians – the sex-subject.

But as late as in the 1970s the folksong virgin was one of two dominating female stereotypes in rock. However, it is important to notice that her maidenlike and humble appearance with an acoustic guitar, long hair and long skirt is a visual strategy of defence against sexual objectification. Also her high soprano voice can be seen as a strategy of defence, since it associates to soft femininity and harmlessness. Her performance on stage is bodily restrained and in the combination of text and music that characterizes rock, the text is emphasized. This musical manoeuvre puts the main focus on the mind and the body is hidden. The themes of the lyrics are so to speak ‘female’ and include nature, mysticism, fairy tales and personal confessions. This text is made by Turid Lundqvist, a so called ‘folksong virgin’ in 1973.

Welcome-House (Välkomme-hus)  
 Music and text: Turid Lundqvist (1973)  
 Translation: Hillevi Ganetz

*An everlasting flower in each trunk (verse 1)*  
*to safely show you the way*  
*to a welcome-house*  
*– a little light in the dark*  
*I’ve laid a welcome-table*  
*some food and wine*  
*crystal and white china*  
*Small bright words against the night*

*But I have no house (verse 2)*  
*and my light is a candle*  
*and the walls are made of concrete*  
*– because this is an urban song*  
*But I can offer you bread and tea*  
*and I can sing and smile*  
*a welcome-song*  
*each time, if you want it*

*But this is not a merry song (verse 3)*  
*though a tune from me to you*  
*made of some morninglight*  
*because a morning in the forest must wait*  
*But you are welcome that day*  
*we are able to leave the city made of stone*  
*for a welcome-house*  
*– a small light in a glade*

The text is written in a naive, girlish tone, for example the words ‘small’ and ‘little’ return several times. The ‘I’ of the lyrics is very humble: she criticizes herself repeatedly; she has no money, no house and she has not written a merry song and she is even prepared for her song to be rejected. The theme of the lyrics is the opposition between nature and culture, where the city stands as a metaphor for culture and the little house in the glade as a metaphor for nature. The naive, girlish tone is in a positive way connected with the nature that is depicted as non-threatening, welcoming and beautiful. The pastoral idyll is fused together with the girl and becomes one: innocent, naive, humble and kind.

Furthermore, women have not just been reduced to a very restricted number of positions in rock. Women have always been the Other in rock, but other Others, such as homosexuals or different ethnic groups, have also had major difficulties in being accepted in the discourse of rock. This is very clear from a critical reading of rock history, in particular Swedish rock history, which is very strongly centred around the white, heterosexual working- or middle class man. Rock history has to be re-written so that rock is conceived of as a discursive field in which a range of different positions, besides the ‘malestream’, are represented. Rock must be described as a continuous, dynamic process, where the ‘malestream’ is confronted with different Others, such as women, homosexuals and different ethnic groups, and also with different genres, such as classical music, jazz, folk music, blues and popular songs (called ‘schlager’ in Swedish). A discourse approach reveals that rock has always developed in interplay and contrast to the music of the ‘Others’.

But there are also other explanations to the fact that there are so very few female rock musicians – in spite of that women listen to rock music quite as much as men. As mentioned before, the conception of the ‘public woman’ is still with us today, but rock music and in particular its ‘malestream’ is founded on the Western construction of masculinity and male sexuality (McClary 1991). This makes it much more difficult for a woman to be a rock musi-

cian than for a man. Furthermore, young women are not socialized into playing rock in the same 'natural' way as young men are in our culture (Bayton 1990). Nevertheless some women overcome these obstacles, but why? The answer is the same as the answer to the question why anybody at all likes and plays rock music. The power of attraction in this means of expression has to do with the fact that making rock music offers collective autonomy, alternative ideals and narcissistic enjoyment (Fornäs, Lindberg & Sernhede 1990). Women, as well as men, need to express and symbolise conflicts, feelings and identity partly beyond the symbolic and the Law of the Father (cf. Lacan). The writing of rock lyrics is a creative and pleasurable process, and at the same time a way of writing oneself into the world. A text is not only a cultural and social product – it is also a discourse expressed by an individual speaking subject. Texts are *polyphonic* (Kristeva 1974/1984) – they consist of a plurality of intersecting textual elements, joined together by a speaking subject who thus becomes herself a part of this polyphony herself.

### Turid Lundqvist: Knowledge and Change

Turid Lundqvist's texts may be described as a *late modern enlightenment* project in the sense that *knowledge* is considered a path to *change*. This marks both her protest and confessional songs and comprises Turid Lundqvist's specific contribution to the singer-songwriter tradition. To understand the central position that protest and confession occupy in Turid's texts or creative world, it is also necessary to *contextualize* them, to discuss the importance of *folk culture and music, the Swedish music movement and the singer-songwriter tradition*, for the motifs in her lyrics.

Traces of the contemporary ideological construction of folk culture can be identified in both her texts and her music. This is particularly clear in those texts that address both the relationship between nature and culture and the advantages of folk culture and nature. The persona – the lady of the woods – Turid Lundqvist uses in certain songs should be seen in the light of the folk musical and lyrical elements that characterised aspects of the Swedish music movement (a non-commercial, alternative movement) in the beginning of the 1970s. The use of what are often referred to as folk elements was a way to indicate 'authenticity', which served as a positive antithesis to supposedly artificial, commercialised pop music.

In 1977 Turid Lundqvist changed record company from a record company associated with the music movement to a 'commercial' one. This 'defection' resulted in an animated discussion in a indignant tone in the journal of the music movement. On the surface it seemed as if it was the change of record company that caused the upset, but on a deeper level, the debate was also about Turid's assertion of the private sphere, of the importance of feelings and of individuals – what was called 'soppy' in the more political sections of the music movement.

This interest in feelings and individual experiences may be explained by Turid's profound dependence on the singer-songwriter tradition, one of the few rock music genres in which women were well-represented at the end of the 1960s/beginning of the 70s. At the core of this tradition were texts that conveyed a *protest* of some sort, that revolved around a *fable*, often written in the same style as old folk ballads, and *confessional* texts – all given a personal expression through a very clearly pronounced subject. The singer-songwriter tradition's texts were – and are – not confined to the male world of experience, as were for instance the 'malestream' texts, and so the door is left open for women artists. The norm applying to stage performance within the genre facilitated the entry of a new and large group of women into the world of rock. Since such performance does not emphasise physical sexuality, there were greater possibilities for white middle-class women to enter the stage since they did not run the risk of being considered primarily 'public women'.

Turid Lundqvist's *protest songs* are remarkably often centred around what is for western culture a typical binary opposition between nature and culture. This should be viewed in relation to the interest in and debates on the environment that flowered in the 1970s – a debate that not only had anti-modern, nostalgic and conservative elements, but also often expressed a *reflexive modernity* (Beck 1986, Giddens 1991). 'Ödegårdar' (Abandoned Farms) from 1973 contains a melancholic backward glance at a time when people lived in harmony with nature, but discloses a belief in change in the last verse. In the song there is also an *ontologising tendency* – in Ziehe's sense of the phrase (1989) – i.e. a quest for superior wisdom and meaning.

'På tredje dagen uppståndna' (On the Third Day Risen) (1975), which also focuses on nature/culture, is more offensive and a critical message pervades the song. Instead of looking back, the text looks ahead towards the future. It is a generational

text in which the parental generation, guilty of imperialism and destruction of nature, stands accused by its children. It is these very children who are spearheading the changes, based on knowledge, which must take place in order to save the world. The text can be read as written in a *prefigurative* culture, a culture where parents learn from their sons and daughters (Mead 1970/1978). However, even if 'On The Third Day Risen' seems to be a more politicised text than 'Abandoned Farms', sharing as it does the perspective of the student movement, it actually strikes a balance between this movement and the perspective of bohemian youth. This is revealed primarily through words that can be traced to one bohemian youth movement in particular – the hippies.

On a cultural level, the *confession* can generally be taken as the aesthetic practice of *subjectification*, a cultural orientation that attempts to cope with the modern. Ziehe (1986) states that in retrospect, the 1970s can be seen as the promised decade of subjectification. However, the confessional texts that we usually associate with the 70s are written by women. Viewed from the perspective of social psychology, the confession can also be seen as the result of a gender socialisation that 'encourages' women's orientation towards relationships and the gender-specific language socialisation that renders women specialists in creating and maintaining close relations through language. Thus Turid, who worked in a music genre largely revolving around confessional texts, is in no way unique in writing confessional songs in the 1970s.

Two of Turid's confessional texts are directed towards the mother and the father respectively. The text on the mother, 'Personligt brev' (Personal Letter) (1975 & 1980) is more ambivalent in its feelings towards the song's main person than the text about the father, which is more idealised. This way of viewing parents was shared by many during the 1970s and the literature written by women at that time is replete with criticised mothers and idealised fathers. Mothers stood for everything that the young women of the 70s neither wanted to be nor have, whereas the fathers stood for professional careers, the world at large and adventure. The ambivalence towards the mother and the idealisation of the father can also be interpreted from a psychological point of view. The love-hate conveyed in 'Personal Letter' can be interpreted in the light of the ambivalence embedded in the symbiotic mother-daughter dyad, and which is based in the often problematic balancing in this relationships between autonomy on the one hand and intimacy on

the other. The father, however, represents difference for girls and consequently a less problematic autonomy; it is on this difference that the idealisation of fathers is based. 'På din motorcykel' (On Your Motorcycle) (1977) is about a daughter's attempts to become a separate individual in relation to her mother, with her father in the role of liberator.

The texts pertaining both the mother and the father have an educational tone; in prefigurative cultures, the child possesses the knowledge needed to improve the parents' lives. In the song about the mother the potential for change lies in the woman's role in the nuclear family, the family that had been under attack for several years when 'Personal Letter' was written. Work will liberate the life force and creativity that have been suppressed by the mother's role. In creative work, mother and daughter meet beyond symbiosis in an adult relationship. In the song on the father too, it is aesthetic creativity which breaks the father's passivity after his wife's death and his daughter's separation from him and which facilitates a new adult companionship between father and daughter. At the same time, the elevation of aesthetic creativity functions as a defence of the daughter's own life choices.

In 'On Your Motorcycle', the persona which has been present throughout Turid Lundqvist's production, the 'lady of the woods' appears for the last time. This persona, mythical, unearthly and pure, makes possible a position of an innocent, neutral observer of human folly. At the same time, this persona, who in various guises was and is shared by other women in rock, functions as 'a room of one's own' in the world of rock, a room reserved for women in which men neither can nor want to enter. The 'lady of the woods' gradually disappears as Turid Lundqvist writes fewer and fewer texts of her own and instead records others' more markedly political songs. It is as though when a woman's own room no longer exists, her own voice also grows silent.

### **Eva Dahlgren: Authenticity and Ambivalence**

Eva Dahlgren's texts are centered around the experiences of living in the late modern world, on a psychological, social and cultural level. A longing for *authenticity*, genuineness, as regards human relationships, the self, views of life and communication runs throughout her songs. But this longing is coupled with a consciousness – stemming from her own reflexive knowledge – of the absence of any-

thing fixed or constant and an awareness that modern people live in a time of instability regarding culture, society and the subject. Dahlgren's songs thus not only express a longing for authenticity but also an insight into its instability. This insight is conveyed, for instance, when the song's 'I' says she would like to know but can do no more than *believe*. This belief, however, is not ontological but attached to the text's self, in its own reflexive knowledge. Eva Dahlgren's lyrics are characterised by *ambivalence*; they are not anchored in any absolute attitude or safe answers, but pose various questions which are answered in different ways.

Eva Dahlgren's route into rock music went via the *schlager*, or popular song, a musical genre – like the singer-songwriter tradition – in which women have long been active. The large number of successful women in this genre may be explained in part by the low status of the *schlager* within popular music. However, Eva Dahlgren has never been a 'typical' *schlager* singer: from the beginning she has written her own material and her texts lay claims to authenticity. On the other hand, she participated twice in the Swedish competition for the Eurovision Song Contest (1979 and 1980) and her work neither originates in nor is directed towards any specific subculture or age group. This lack of defined public initially helped Eva Dahlgren's career in two ways. It gave access to a *mass audience* since she invited everyone to listen, so to speak, without reservation. And it helped her artistic ambitions to be 'Eva Dahlgren', a unique, *individualised voice*, free from genre-bound demands as regards words and music.

Eva Dahlgren's work contains two very broad themes: one concerns *identity* and the other *relationships*. The identity theme encompasses three aspects: social identity, subjective identity and cultural identity. That all these aspects overlap each other is clear in the song 'Ung och stolt' (Young and Proud) from 1987. Thematically, this song tends most towards *social identity*, but it is not only a defence of youth as a social category; it is also an *adolescent text* (Kristeva 1990). Using the persona of the warrior woman, Dahlgren describes an oceanic condition and the oscillating between impotence and omnipotence so typical of adolescence. These experiences also influence the form of the text; it is ambivalent, with an open structure – reminiscent of Edith Södergran's poem, 'Vierge moderne' (1916).

The text's of Eva Dahlgren that are more concentrated to *subjective identity* are possible to analyse as texts dealing with *the self as a reflexive*

*project* (Giddens 1991). It is not only these texts but also Eva Dahlgren's production as a whole that comprise such a project: the 'I' of the songs continually examines itself, its motives, actions and goals. 'Ingen och alla är du' (No One And Everyone Is You) (1978) presents the late modern experience of an all-encompassing fragmentation and meaninglessness which express themselves in several questions posed in the first verses, which are never answered. The 'I' of the text tries to deal with this lack of contingency through attempts at the cultural orientation Ziehe (1989) calls subjectification, which involves the search for closeness and psychic intimacy. This can be identified in the song's title, directed towards an intimate 'you', which is actually the audience – 'no one and everyone'. Yet at the same time that the song's 'I' seeks closeness and authenticity, these are undermined in a way typical for Dahlgren's texts – 'what is right for you/ I see as a lie'.

In 'Mitt liv' (My Life) (1987) the perspective has narrowed, pointing more exclusively to the self and especially to the experience of a split, fragmented 'I'. There is no 'you' here; the song's I reflects upon its unique subjective identity. The text focuses upon the experience of a fragmented self and the simultaneous longing for wholeness and permanence. Questions remain open, the ambivalence remains. The song's 'I' seems to understand the difficulties involved in living in late modernity, but also so the advantages of the uncompleted.

*Relations* between people is another clear theme in Eva Dahlgren's songs. The context of the songs on close, intimate *love relations* are placed is comprised by the changes in those very relations which are typical of late modernity. According to Giddens (1992) there has been a shift from *romantic love* secured in marriage to *confluent love* as part of a *pure relationship* in which love is only one – albeit very important – part. Dahlgren's songs can thus be described as more about relationships than about love. 'Bara en väg ut' (Only One Way Out) (1984) describes a failed close relationship, characterised by lack of lust, genuineness and mutual open communication – basic components for a pure relationship. The song's 'you' also idealises the song's 'I'. This distancing idealisation belongs to the world of romantic love and not that of confluent love, which is based on intimacy and the ability to be open. The title, 'Only One Way Out' may be interpreted to mean that the only possible solution to problems in a relationship is to end it when it is not worth maintaining, since neither partner gets enough out of it. But the title can also be interpreted more act-

ively, less pessimistically – meaning that there is actually a way to get the pure relationship to function. The song does not describe this alternative, but in ‘Jag klär av mej naken’ (I Undress Myself Naked) (1987) it becomes clear that the way is *authenticity*. This song argues that close relations must be based on mutual giving and receiving of genuine feelings and a straight and honest view of the other which encompasses both good and bad sides. It rejects the idealisation which the song’s ‘you’ also expresses, which has its roots in the tradition of romantic love, viewing the woman as a soul without a body – the one pole in the dichotomy of madonna and whore. Instead, the song’s ‘I’ claims – as do many other border-crossing female artist in rock music – that body and soul are one.

Eva Dahlgren’s songs about *social relations* can be analysed in the context of the *risk society* (Beck 1986, Giddens 1991). In this society everyone is confronted – as individuals as well as citizens of the world – with various possibilities for action in their daily social existence. Dahlgren’s texts concerning social relations reflect the *risks* involved in meeting and relating to other people as well as the *trust* needed if inter-personal relations are to function. In ‘Människor gör ont’ (People Hurt) (1982) the negative sides of the risk society prevail: the text’s ‘I’ describes the people as essentially evil, and no explanations are given for their malevolent actions. Trust is totally vanquished and the ‘I’ retreats wounded back into itself with the words, ‘never more/ will I trust anyone else’. Subsequent albums contain songs in which trust is more prominent. ‘Skeppet’ (The Ship) (1987) expresses a more ambivalent attitude towards the question of basic human evil or goodness: on the one hand, the ‘I’ wants to believe in people’s innate goodness, on the other, the ‘I’ knows that social conditions determine how people act towards each other. This ambivalence is maintained in Dahlgren’s texts thematising social relations. People are seen as both good and bad, the texts’ ‘I’ balances the awareness of risk with trust.

Kristeva (1987/1989) sees *melancholy* as a modern discourse that leaves traces in people’s texts. Melancholy is not one of Eva Dahlgren’s themes, but it sets a tone, a linguistic tone that can be perceived in the texts. A text can never be melancholic in a clinical sense since a deeply depressed person rarely speaks much less writes. However, a text can have *melancholic elements*, and such texts always entail a temporary visit to melancholia and a simultaneous victory over it since language, at least partly, symbolises the sor-

row of loss. But sorrow can never be wholly expressed in a text with elements of melancholy. Instead of openly talking about the causes or reasons for the loss, such a text conveys the *feeling* of loss, emptiness, longing and powerlessness.

‘Guldlock’ (Goldenlocks) (1991) is suffused with a vague tone of loss and impotence which characterises Eva Dahlgren’s melancholic songs. ‘Goldenlocks’ expresses a longing for a child, but this longing seems to issue from a psychic vacuum, from the ‘black hole’ of melancholy.

Although melancholy as a rule is not a theme but a tone, ‘Blå hjärtans blues’ (The Blue Heart Blues) is the exception to the rule. It is a text about melancholy, about the melancholy that comes from a ‘blue’ heart. In the song, the listener, the ‘I’ and Peggy Lee, who the text’s ‘I’ is listening to, are united in a bittersweet pain that is never transgressed, where the feeling of melancholy is central – that type of melancholy that Kristeva (1987/1989) posits as characteristic of women. But among Eva Dahlgren’s texts with melancholic elements, there is also one describing the surmounting of melancholy. Unlike the other songs, ‘Du som älskar’ (You Who Love) is written in the past tense, and the ‘I’ of the text speaks from a position *outside* the crypt of melancholy, which is locked from the outside with the key of language.

### Kajsa Grytt: Body and Feelings

Kajsa Grytt’s texts are imbued with a strong ambition to construct an alternative femininity, a female rebel. The ‘I’ who narrates and the ‘she’ who is sometimes described in the texts are not always strong and independent, but they always show their real *feelings*, which in itself is presented as an act of resistance. These feelings are anchored in the *body*, which also forms the source of a pleasure-filled and openly expressed sexuality. This emphasis on body and feelings can in part be explained in the light of their time and their subculture – the punk culture.

Punk music and, later, new wave music dominated the alternative rock scene in Sweden and the western world at the end of the 1970s and into the 80s. When the group Tant Strul was formed in Stockholm in 1980, a large, lively music scene was already established. As with their British counterparts, there were some differences between the Swedish punk bands that can be traced to differences between the underground youth traditions. Swedish bands as Tant Strul, Eldkvarn and Dag Vag belonged to the *bohemian youth tradition*,

while bands like Ebba Grön and KSMB were more involved with the *radical tradition*. Bohemian rock is associated with the ideals of romanticism – emphasising feelings, originality, integrity and subjectivity – which can be detected in Kajsa Grytt's texts. However, Tant Strul worked not just in the bohemian tradition but also in its 'female' variant. At the end of the 1970s the number of women rock musicians increased with punk, which can be explained by the widening influence of the *women's movement*, punk's emphasis on *everyday experiences*, including sexuality, and by the '*do-it-yourself*' *creativity* that paved the way for women who had never held an electric guitar in their hands before. Female punk and the new wave music also often presented femininity symbolically as a masquerade and thereby de-mystified the conventional images of gender. Tant Strul worked in this way as well.

Thus, rooted in a bohemian tradition, the woman rebel is created in Kajsa Grytt's texts. There is already a glimpse of her in Tant Strul's first album (1982), in the song 'Hetta' (Heat). The text's 'you' – who is both the audience and Tant Strul – proudly dances on the hard city streets. What is notable about this 'you', in contrast to the surrounding empty, unfeeling people with their sharp looks, is a strong physicality coupled with genuine and pure feelings. The stress on inner experiences is derived from one of the song's contexts – the bohemian tradition – but can also be interpreted in relation to the opposition between the so-called *care rationality* and the so-called *use rationality* (Halsaa 1988). This is even more evident in the rhetorically normative 'Vår tur nu' (Our Turn Now) (1990), where care rationality – in our culture associated with femininity – is pitted against the 'masculine' use rationality. Feelings, weakness, life and love are placed in a positive polarity opposed to material wealth, lovelessness, coldness and power; the one pole is posited as wholly incompatible with the other. If Turid Lundqvist's texts describe change anchored in the right knowledge, Kajsa Grytt's may be said to be about change anchored in the right feeling. In Grytt's texts, feeling is synonymous with resistance.

'Rosa' (1983) depicts a female rebel with a long history – a witch. In the witch Rosa, body and feelings combine in a way that suggests to the listener/reader the bohemian rebel glimpsed in 'Heat'. But what distinguishes Rosa from the urban rebel is that body, feelings and *nature* are linked together. The witch Rosa can be read in a context of neo paganism: she is an example of a 'feminine' spiritual-

ity which is conveyed through bodily experience, dance, sexuality and movement.

The witch is not only the strong, feminine model that the modern women's movement and women in rock set forth, but also a *contrast*. The witch, the female monster, the she-devil, etc. is the opposite to and thereby indissolubly connected with the virgin, madonna, the female angel – a dichotomy that has influenced the view of women for centuries. That this latter view of femininity is still necessary to take into account and examine is evident in the fact that Kajsa Grytt, Turid Lundqvist and Eva Dahlgren have all written songs about *angels*, albeit in different versions. Kajsa Grytt's angels in 'Som änglarna' (Like Angels) (1983) are cold and lack feelings, while her witch/rebel is warm and full of feeling: the witch's characteristics are elevated into goodness and the angel's degraded to evil. Turid Lundqvist's angel in 'Stjärnor och änglar' (Stars And Angels) (1975) falls on bad times, but she has a chance to change, and as in other Turid Lundqvist songs, this change will be based on knowledge. In Eva Dahlgren's 'Ängeln i rummet' (The Angel In The Room) (1989), good and evil are not split among various people as in the other texts mentioned above; the angel symbolises the good and evil that exists within every person. In this case, there is no either/or but instead a both/and – an ambivalence typical for Eva Dahlgren's songs.

All three rock songwriters use imagery taken from nature, which should be seen in relation to the great significance of nature in the Swedish poetic tradition in general. However, they use this imagery in different ways. In 'Amazon' (1983) from Tant Strul's album with the same name, the woman rebel is constructed through an augmented physicality which is melded with nature and expressed through a powerful ecstasy concentrated in the text's 'I', who is both a warrior woman and a great river. It is not only the body's boundaries with nature that are challenged but also its boundaries with the audience. The song describes an oceanic condition, conjured up not least by its water symbolism. The infinite, oceanic feminine 'I' and the female body 'without an end' is discussed by Cixous in her famous essay 'Sorties' (1975/1986), where she claims that the 'newly born woman' comprises the basis of a feminine discourse that challenges the phallo-centric order. The unbounded rebel in 'Amazon' also resists the Law of the Father. However, there are also problems with a position that merges nature and the woman as pre-



cisely this association is used in the argument that women are, for instance, less suitable than men for participating in public life. Nevertheless, neither 'Amazon' nor a pantheistic text like Eva Dahlgren's 'Jag är Gud' (I Am God) (1991) is clearly traditional in this sense as the fusion of nature and the woman also serves as a symbol for power and strength. In comparison with a text like Turid's 'Välkomme-hus' (The Welcome House) (1973) above, in which nature/the woman is presented as small, modest, and self-effacing, the aforementioned texts indicate that cracks have begun to show in the cultural construction of femininity.

In Kajsa Grytt's texts about *relationships, sexuality* plays a central role, one that should be seen in the context of punk but also in relation to that part of the women's movement that emphasises women's sexual pleasure and pleasure in their own satisfaction. One text that highlights a pleasurable sexuality that needs not lead to anything other than pleasure is 'Kom hit in' (Come In Here) (1985). The song's 'I' is active, demanding and enjoying and she is the one who sees instead of being seen as in so many other rock texts. Sexuality often functions as an element in a *quest-romance* (Giddens 1992) in Kajsa Grytt's texts: sexual encounters are seen as detours on the way to the goal – a consummate love relationship. The quest-romance is central in 'Drömmar' (Dreams) (1990), where through experience, the 'I' is entirely aware that the pleasure she feels is not permanent ('there's always a worm somewhere'). The text also contains romantic idealised love and confluent love. At the same time as a close love relationship is considered worth maintaining so long as both parties get enough out of it, the 'I' also maintains a dream of the idealised 'Mr Right', of the dream man and sublime love. This coexistence is, according to Giddens (1992), typical for late modernity.

The emotional rebel is also present in 'Dreams', in the words 'the one who dares not love/ dares nothing'. But she is also 'frustrated/ and searches so fixated', which can also be interpreted to mean that it is not just a question of looking for love, but also a fear of emptiness, tristess and repetition that

drives her – that attempt at orientation in the late modern which Ziehe (1989) calls *potentiation*.

Kajsa Grytt's texts thematise not only being in a relationship but equally, being without one. The *losses* of the other – but also changes of residence and work – comprise a sort of passage in the late modern life course, according to Giddens (1991). The individual must be capable of mourning these losses in order to develop further. The grief that follows the dissolution of a love relationship is a prominent theme in Kajsa Grytt's texts – from the first album to the last. The loss of the other does not have melancholic elements – it is about sorrow and not melancholy – but the texts that thematize the loss of self do have such elements. These texts fill Grytt's latest album (1995) but it seems as if the destabilising of the identity that is outlined there not only produces feelings of emptiness but also points ahead to something new, as if one passage in the lifecourse were completed and the 'I' of her songs – enriched by experience – is ready for the next one.

## Conclusion

In terms of themes and motifs, there are more differences than similarities between the three authorships. I have not found a female rock text but a *textual polyphony*. It is also obvious that I have not found a female voice but a *polyphony of female voices*. The 'I' of the lyrics speaks from different and continually shifting positions, both within the same authorship and compared between the three textual universes. It is not possible to find one delimited femininity in the texts; rather they construct a web of plural femininities. I have also found many examples of intertextuality between 'high' and 'low' in the lyrics. This supports Jameson's (1979) assumption that the limits between the two cultures – elite and popular – are subverted in an ongoing process. But as the example with the symbol of the angel points out, it is not only a matter of intertextuality, but both cultures also use symbols from a common cultural reference library. In other words, I have not found one popular culture but a *cultural polyphony*.

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