Editorial
Hvenegård-Lassen, Kirsten ; Stoltz, Pauline

Published in:
NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research

Publication date:
2014

Document Version
Early version, also known as pre-print

Link to publication from Aalborg University

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

? You may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
? You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
? You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Take down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at vbn@aub.aau.dk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from vbn.aau.dk on: december 06, 2018
NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/swom20

Editorial
Kirsten Hvenegård-Lassen & Pauline Stoltz
Published online: 25 Feb 2014.

To cite this article: Kirsten Hvenegård-Lassen & Pauline Stoltz (2014) Editorial, NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research, 22:1, 1-3, DOI: 10.1080/08038740.2013.872510

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2013.872510

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the “Content”) contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions
The gendered/sexed body travels through the articles and book reviews in this issue of NORA. The articles attest to the observation that feminist materialism has become an influential and productive theoretical turn, which enables us to ask new questions as well as take up familiar ones in new ways. The analyses presented in the articles illustrate the strength of the historically fixed binary structuring of gender categories and the associated disciplining of bodily matter. However, inspired by a feminist materialist view of the body as fluid and non-bounded matter, they also read against this fixity, thus examining both how bodies become caught up in the gridlock of categories and how the discursive-material reality of bodily matter slips through these grids.

In “En-Gendering the Sublime: Aesthetics and Politics in the Eighteenth Century” Kristina Fjelkestam analyses the (gender) politics of the sublime and argues that the notion of citizenship is thoroughly intertwined with this aesthetic category. As a philosophy of the body and through its orientation towards emotions, aesthetics in its modern version was coded in feminine terms, but the concept of the sublime was nevertheless considered masculine. Taking her point of departure in Kant and Edmund Burke, Fjelkestam argues “that Kant’s en-gendering of the sublime develops political consequences, in which women are disqualified from citizenship, because of his claim that they only have the innate capacity for a ‘beautiful’ understanding—not one of sublimely ennobling magnitude”. Thus, eighteenth-century political theory constructed the universal (male) citizen through an aesthetic framework, since the ability to act ethically was seen as an essential feature of the citizen—and that capability in turn was defined as sublime.

While women were thus initially prevented from entering the space of politics, they have since become—paraphrasing Nirmal Puwar—space invaders (Puwar 2004). Erkka Railo transports our attention to gendered political subjectivity and the body of the citizen from eighteenth-century philosophy closer to the present day in his analysis of the positioning of female Finnish politicians in the women’s magazine Anna between 1975 and 2005. Despite the leap forward in time, the Enlightenment notions of gendered citizenship pointed out by Fjelkestam prevail as a backdrop to the representations of female bodies in politics. Railo argues that the articles in Anna consistently address two issues that are seen as barriers to the political participation of women: the private lives of female politicians and the female body, which is considered to be unsuitable for political work. Railo follows the development in significations of the female politician’s body in Anna over 30 years, answering the question: “How do the significations assigned to female bodies define their subject position in relation to the institution of the state?”

The articles by Fjelkestam and Railo complement each other across the historical divide—and across the divide between “high” (political philosophy) and “low”
(women’s magazines) culture; a similar line of communication is opened up between
the articles by Ann-Sofie Lönnngren on Strindberg’s *A Madman’s Manifesto* and
Rocio Carrasco on contemporary US virtual reality films.

Ann-Sofie Lönnngren re-reads Strindberg through a lens of feminist materialism
and in particular Karen Barad’s framework in “Swelling, Leaking, Merging—A
Material Feminist Reading of August Strindberg’s *A Madman’s Manifesto*”.
Lönnngren thus revisits her own (and others’) queer-inspired readings of Strindberg,
asking what implications the turn towards materialism might have for literary
analysis. She argues that the humanist foundation of literary scholarship creates a
blindness towards textual aspects, making them appear as absurdities, not least in so-
called “realistic” texts. Thus, with respect to *A Madman’s Manifesto*, there are rich
discussions of heteronormativity as well as gendered and sexual transgressions, but
the monstrous bodies and somatic alterations are rarely taken up. Even if Barad’s
conceptualization of matter as agential does not refer to literary readings, Lönnngren
argues that it allows us to tell stories that are otherwise silenced about characters who
do not have a position from which they may speak. In *A Madman’s Manifesto*, the
narrator’s heteronormative discourse may thus be partly subverted through a focus
on processes of literary materialization. This enables the telling of a non-normative
body narrative of same-sex relations that is not de-humanizing.

As Lönnngren points out in her article, “the literary genre that is often referred to
within material feminism is science fiction”. This is the genre into which Rocio
Carrasco delves (albeit in the medium of film rather than text) in the article “(Re)
defining the Gendered Body in Cyberspace: The Virtual Reality Film”. Like
Lönnngren, Carrasco takes her point of departure in the materialist turn within
feminism, here with an emphasis on Rosi Braidotti’s deleuzian materialism and
Katherine Hayle’s posthumanist framework. Carrasco argues that the virtual reality
film offers opportunities for understanding the complex relationship between
humanity and information technologies. More specifically, this relationship is
analysed and discussed through the body images offered by virtual reality films.
While radical redefinitions of the human body are not displayed in this popular
genre, the body images they present do blur or move beyond dualistic assumptions of
gender and sex, suggesting the instability of the human body in cyberspace. Even if it
is “not possible simply to step away from cultural constructions of gender, the virtual
reality film urges audiences to find new modes of conceptualization”. Carrasco
analyses *Johnny Mnemonic*, *The 13th Floor*, eXistenZ, and *The Matrix* and argues
that these films all hint at the complexities of corporeality in virtual reality contexts.

The future is also the theme of the position paper “What about the Future? The
Troubled Relationship between Futures and Feminism” by Helena Bergman,
Kristina Engwall, Ulrika Gunnarsson-Östling, and Livia Johannesson. Here the
troubled relationship between futures and feminisms is discussed in the context of the
lack of connection between feminist studies of the future and mainstream futures
studies. They argue that there is a need to consider the implications of the lack of
feminist interventions in the field of futures studies, for example regarding the
possibilities of critical discussions of potential feminist futures.

While we happily present this issue of NORA, which we think attests to the
swelling, leaking, and merging creativity of contemporary feminist and gender
research on the past, the present, and the future, we also have less happy news from
the world of Nordic gender journals. The Swedish Journal for Gender Research
(Tidskrift för Genusvetenskap) and 30 other Swedish journals within the humanities
and social sciences stand to lose their economic support from The Swedish Research
Council (Vetenskapsrådet). The argument seems to be that we should all publish in
international and English-language journals. The Nordic feminist and gender
research environment—and NORA—greatly benefits from the existence of journals
in the respective Nordic languages. We thus hope that the ongoing protests will be
successful.

Kirsten Hvenegård-Lassen & Pauline Stoltz

References