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## Journalism of Relation

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**JOURNALISM OF RELATION:  
SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF 'WHITENESS' AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS  
IN  
CONTEMPORARY DANISH JOURNALISTIC PRACTICE AND PRODUCTION**

JOURNALISTIEK VAN RELATIE:  
DE SOCIALE CONSTRUCTIES VAN 'WITHEID' EN DE IMPLICATIES  
IN  
HEDENDAAGSE PRAKTIJK EN PRODUCTIE VAN DE DEENSE JOURNALISTIEK

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift

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BOLETTE BENEDICTSEN BLAAGAARD

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## PROLOGUE

The Icelandic myth of Ragnar Lodbrog (eighth century CE) and Kraka (also known as Aslaug) goes like this. The legendary Viking Lodbrog wanted to meet the descendant of a king and a valkyrie, Kraka, whom his men had spotted while baking bread (and burning it because they were fascinated by her beauty, the story goes) on the shores of Norway. In order to test Kraka's wits Lodbrog incited her to meet him neither clothed nor naked, neither full nor fasting, and neither alone nor accompanied. Solving this riddle Kraka draped her hair around her naked body and tied it with a fishing-net. She travelled biting an onion which was not considered food and signalled that she was not fasting, and she allowed a dog to accompany her. The story of Kraka has many versions. She was raised by strangers because her father thought she was in danger after her mother's death. In one version of the tale she is hidden inside a harp which the strangers steal and discover Kraka inside. In another version she is borne down a river in a basket and picked up by commoners in Norway, who raise her as their own child. In order to hide her royal and divine heritage (the valkyries were semi-goddesses in Norse mythology) they name her Kraka (which means crow) and in some versions they force her not to wash but stay soiled to hide her beauty.

The myth of Kraka and Lodbrog is well-known to most Danish people. It is a part of the stories the Danes are told as children; they circulate and constitute a Nordic cultural memory that tells the Danes who we are – fighting, smart Vikings and demi-goddesses, that is! The name 'Kraka' has been adopted for a book prize given by a women's organisation and by journals to signal strength and female intelligence. And the tales of Ragnar Lodbrog fill volumes.

Ragnar Lodbrog appears in both the prose and the poetic *Edda*. The two 'eddas' are collections of Icelandic sagas and Norse mythology assembled in the centuries 1000–1300 CE. The man who is often credited with the title of editor of these volumes is the priest Sæmund the Wise<sup>1</sup>. Sæmund was the head of a large farm called Oddi Rangarvalla, which is still situated outside Reykjavik, Iceland. Generations of priests lived and worked on this farm – the editor of the *Poetic Edda*, Snorri Sturluson, also came from there. As one of the versions of Kraka's early years has already indicated,

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<sup>1</sup> It is however not at all certain that he did in fact edit the volumes.



the writing of the orally-based Icelandic and Viking sagas by the clergy meant that they sometimes acquired a flavour of the Christian parables and legends. Kraka's royal ancestry, endangerment and subsequent trip in a basket down the river share specifics with the Old Testament story of Moses.

The fact that most surviving sources in the British Isles and the Nordic countries today regarding the Vikings were recorded by monks, who were often the victims of the Viking raids and did not share their religious beliefs, allows an often invisible Christian bias to underscore the strangeness – otherness – of the Vikings in Northern European discourse. The cultural memory which is produced on these Christianised terms underpins the later interpretations of, for instance, archaeological findings. The way that Christian assumptions underlie the Nordic self-reference is moreover detectable in debates about contemporary relations with others in which secularised democratic politics are infused with Christian rhetoric and concepts (see case study 3). However, using such examples to support an argument that the Christianisation of the sagas is a contamination of an authentic text denies the text – oral or in written form – its process of becoming. Before it was written down the tale of young Kraka's destiny undoubtedly changed over and over again according to the audience and the societal context in which the *scald* or story teller found him- or herself. This is the way cultural memory<sup>2</sup> production works; in a dynamic relationship between the story teller, the public and the culturally defined society sustaining the relationship. It does not mean that there is an authentic Nordic Viking essence, which we as academics need to dig up, but that the process and changeability of knowledge is constitutive of national and cultural identity formations. The corpus of tales of the Vikings, such as Ragnar Lodbrog and Kraka, creates a foundation for a strong unified identity of Nordic self-awareness.

### *Notes on interdisciplinarity*

I began this introduction reciting the myth of Lodbrog and Kraka because of its theme, the female, and its feminist associations, of the connection to Nordic mythology, of cultural memory and of the questionability of this cultural memory. In

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<sup>2</sup> I will develop the concept of 'cultural memory' in relation to journalistic practice and production in chapter 2. I built mainly on José van Dijck's (2007) work on mediated cultural memories because of the importance she places on the mediating possibilities particular to the digital age and in relation to memories.



particular I begin here because Kraka's wit and her balancing act between extremes inform and exemplify my interdisciplinary approach to the topic of social constructions of whiteness and their implications in contemporary Danish journalistic practice and production. As a method of research, this interdisciplinary approach combines pluralism of themes with versatility in dealing with them. Interdisciplinarity implies therefore a critical distance from the disciplines that frame this dissertation – gender, journalism, ethnicity, cultural studies and social philosophy. It also requires, however, creativity in devising interconnections and resonances among them. Kraka solves Lodbrog's riddle by giving answers to the pure forms of expression in a way that avoids extremes that may cancel each other out but rather urges them to work together and thus creates another route. Interdisciplinary research demands of the researcher a creative mind that sees the varied disciplinary paths that need to be taken, challenged and exchanged in order to forge a productive answer to a research question. By extension this means that my approach to research is methodologically interdisciplinary and not just thematically so. Different methods, drawn from a range of disciplines, will be applied, adopted and assessed in the different chapters that compose this dissertation. I shall expand on this in the next section. Rather than ontologising one's discipline to take 'measurement of other disciplines according to their ability to exemplify one's own' (Gordon 2003: 20), an interdisciplinary approach initiates a '... suspension of one's discipline [that] could initiate a new relationship to that discipline; one of a higher level of understanding' (Gordon 2003: 21).<sup>3</sup> An interdisciplinary approach to historically and nationally produced and supported issues of identity productions in the mass media therefore suspends any appeal to methodological purity. The pure historical account, the pure philosophical reading or the analyses of narratives in journalism studies are equally put on hold. I shall evoke all of them in support of each other and of the material I am analysing, but stay vigilant and questioning in order to gain further understanding of the issues at stake.

The urgency of implementing such an approach is moreover supported by the subject matter of this dissertation. Journalism is developing in technological, geographical and in political ways that are impossible to predict. This dissertation is built on

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<sup>3</sup> In his text, Lewis Gordon is theorising the relation between religion and philosophy and finds that they may gain from each other's perspectives. Gordon is not making an explicit argument for the idea of interdisciplinarity. I do, however, find his argument well suited for an extension into my argument for interdisciplinarity.



analyses of journalistic practices and productions in contemporary Denmark which are constantly affected by and affecting other geographical, political and technological realms. Staying 'on top of' the subject matter necessitates flexibility in the disciplinary and methodological approaches. I will return to the issue of my methodology below. This is how I see my interdisciplinary approach in gender- and ethnicity studies: being disciplinarily positioned in neither history nor philosophy I drape the theoretical frame of this dissertation in the concept of journalistic cultural memories (chapter 2); the qualitative content analyses are based neither in media studies nor in journalism studies but in a practice of journalistic subjectivity informed by phenomenological 'race' and gender theories (chapter 1); and I am accompanied by questions of accountability – which are crucial to interdisciplinary research on gender and ethnicity. As the concept suggests – and how I will define it in chapter 2 – journalistic cultural memory is derived from the emerging field of memory studies, which José van Dijck (2007) theorises in terms of mediated cultural memories, and I develop into the concept of journalistic cultural memories (chapter 2). As the terminology suggests, this approach balances between sociological disciplines (media studies, history) and fields of study adopted from the humanities (gender and ethnicity studies, cultural studies). Rather than confining my research to the sociological methodology often applied in media studies, I focus on and develop my own theoretical approach to the analyses of journalistic data and discourse through a qualitative theoretical framework drawn from the human sciences. I am then not only adopting interdisciplinarity in terms of engaging with several related disciplines, but also attempting to enrich a sociological field of research with qualitative human sciences based in cultural studies, postcolonial- and feminist studies, and studies of 'race', ethnicity and 'whiteness'. I am therefore, by extension, positioning journalism as a bridge between the humanities and the social sciences, both thematically and methodologically.

The questions that underscore this dissertation evolve as the analyses develop and change. What remains constant however is the high degree of accountability for the research that I do. I am Danish and, as the astute reader knowledgeable in Danish will have noticed from the cover of this dissertation, I am a descendant of Lodbrog and



Aslaug.<sup>4</sup> The lineage is less important than the fact that my family on my mother's side is able to trace its ancestry back thirteen centuries. Even more to the point, this is not a unique case in the Danish society and even less so in other Nordic societies like the Icelandic. The possibility of doing this creates a very strong sense of a common history, a common past, and thus a common identity. I am not only dealing with Danish cultural memory and the non-memory of colonial possessions (case study 1) and the whiteness of the Viking imaginary (case study 2), but I am implicated in these stories as a Dane and to the extent of literal familiarity. I also trained as a journalist. Some journalistic productions of my hand can be found online but most are in the possession of the radio station where I spent my internship. The radio station produced up to three minutes of domestic and international news every hour for commercial radio stations all over Denmark. The social construction of whiteness and its implications in contemporary Danish journalistic practice and production are therefore constructions and implications in which I have a stake and for which I choose to make myself accountable.

The awareness of these cultural and historical knots of accountability and the high degree of personal situatedness informs not only this introduction but the entire dissertation. It is in my view a pivotal component of interdisciplinary research in gender and ethnicity studies which functions as a model that I will adapt to the analysis of journalistic practices. It follows that because I argue for the relevance of these fields of studies and research to journalistic production and practice, I also call for increased awareness of journalistic subjectivity and situatedness. I urge journalist-subjects to consider the argument that I make and the positionality I practise throughout this dissertation in relation to their own work and practice. Moreover, my personal and journalistic accountability as well as the subject matter of this dissertation will reveal itself in my style of writing. Journalistic practices are products of and stand in relation to social, cultural, political and religious formations and as such they relate to current affairs of the world. My theorising about journalistic practice and production opens a space for mirroring the journalistic capacity to reflect and discuss the world of today. The essay style which I adopt in parts of this dissertation is supported by and works with the content matter. I seek to challenge the

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<sup>4</sup> In fact my family tree encompasses the son of Sæmund the Wise as well.



format in order to allow for a different theorising – a different content – within the claims of the dissertation (see chapter 3, case study 1 and 3).

### *Notes on methodology*

My methodological starting point is taking into account the notion of and the scholarship about difference. The analytical backbone of this dissertation is founded in cultural studies, postcolonial and feminist studies, and studies of ‘race’, ethnicity and ‘whiteness’ – i.e. fields of interdisciplinary approaches that traditionally have been ‘anti-methodology’ (Threadgold 2003) precisely because they cannot be contained within set disciplinary boundaries. However, these fields of research converge methodologically on the emphases on the importance of contextualising research. I shall accordingly introduce my methodological background in the following sections. I draw on a variety of cultural analytical and semiotic methods based on my theoretical focus, which is the embodied structures experience and subjectivities, as well as the affectivities and sensorial production that follow. My understanding of journalistic practice, as stated above, is positioned in and developed within the theoretical approaches of the human sciences. Through this framework the dissertation also develops a strong theoretical discussion of journalistic ethics linked to mediated subjectivities and to the relation to others. Following some strands of continental critical theory (phenomenology and poststructuralism), I base my concern for the concept and the embodied materiality of difference on a critique of objectivity, universalism and binary constructions of identities. In my critique of a universal ‘objectivity’, like many poststructuralist scholars of gender and ethnicity, I will embrace the particularity of lived experience in order to develop generalities. Methodologically I begin with experience and concrete manifestations of self-other relations in journalistic production and practice.

Self-other relations are thus pivotal to my reading of journalistic productions and practices. The dissertation is situated within theories of gender and ethnicity studies inspired by the ideas of Simone de Beauvoir’s ethics of ambiguity (1976) which presupposes a political commitment to social change. De Beauvoir’s ethics also builds on collectivity and on understanding the self as always already implicated with the other – that is, my freedom is conditioned upon the freedom of the other. Rosi Braidotti (2006) is one of the feminist philosophers who continually return to de



Beauvoir's philosophy of not-one. Braidotti urges a collective consciousness-raising as an ethico-political movement towards change. Edouard Glissant's poetics of relation (1997) is another great inspiration in my theoretical framework, which both sustains my methodological approach and emphasises the need for transformative and creative politics of otherness. I therefore position my research theoretically in light of self-other relations, solidarity and difference within the production and practice of Danish journalism.

As recent scholars of de Beauvoir's significant work have noticed, her method of philosophical inquiry still makes disciplinary waves in that it takes as a starting point the rejection of a universal viewpoint on theoretical practice and knowledge production (Fullbrook and Fullbrook 2008). This point of departure is today common to many gender scholars following de Beauvoir and 'race' and ethnicity scholars following, for instance, Frantz Fanon (1967), who also made a similar point in relation to 'racial' differences. This methodology is what makes continental philosophers express their philosophical ideas in the literary genre of the novel (Fullbrook and Fullbrook 2008). Through the novel the experience of, for instance, the concept of *absence* is passed on and illustrated at the same time (Fullbrook and Fullbrook 2008: 148-157). "“To make” philosophy, [de Beauvoir] argues, is “to be” philosophical in the sense of sensitizing oneself to these individual metaphysical experiences, and then describing them’ (Fullbrook and Fullbrook 2008:146). This dissertation is not a novel, however. My methodological approach nevertheless combines critique with creativity in both the theoretical framework (chapters 1–3) and the case study analyses (case studies 1–3) when addressing particular and concrete experiences of journalistic practices and productions. From these concrete experiences, my methodological move evolves to combine the study of cultural memory (van Dijck 2007) with the analysis of situated and embodied practices. The aim is to '[a]ccount[...] backwards for the affective impact of various items and data upon oneself [which] is the process of remembering' (Braidotti 2006: 173). Self-reflexivity is thus applied to the self-other relation and to the ethical modes of interaction to which it gives rise. The address is signified by a sensitised reading and backed by appropriate semiotic, discursive, and qualitative content analyses. By appropriate I mean to say that each concrete journalistic practice or production of journalism calls on different analytical methods and therefore the case studies present



varied methodological emphases as well as thematic variety. Semiotic, discourse analysis and qualitative content analyses have a slightly different genealogy from what my phenomenological framework may suggest. Though I understand discourse analysis in the Foucauldian tradition to go beyond textual analyses, my analytical approach introduces a textual starting point which becomes foundational as a way of assessing the affective impact on the self and the effect of power relations. These will be traced through a phenomenological emphasis on experience and embodiment.

The semiotic, discursive and qualitative content analyses are also infused with postcolonial theories and theories of differences as well as a further development of these theories into proposals for a new cosmopolitan ethics. Pivotal in this ‘nomadic methodology’ (Braidotti 2006), which uses memory as positive and productive capacity, is that it is socially and culturally embedded and embodied. Thus it is not composed by comparative layers of texts and genres alone (chapters 1–3; case study 1). The conclusions reached through these analyses are, moreover, subjected to a reworking in light of the theoretical framework presented in the three first chapters of the dissertation. That is, I propose an embodied and embedded ethical response to what is initially given as epistemological, textual data analysis. By this method I aim to account for a grounded and situated analytical reading of concrete journalistic practices, in order to address both an absence of self-reflexivity and a possibility of self-transformation within journalistic practice.

The weight placed on experience and memory again draws attention to the accountability of the researcher’s position. My particular embedded position, as a Dane, a cultural and social critic, and as someone who is trained as a journalist, keeps me questioning my own motives for asking certain questions or for reaching certain conclusions. Part of my methodological approach of accountability, then, encompasses self-reflexivity. It is a constant retrieval and re-consideration of the social and cultural memory (defined in chapter 2) involved in the journalistic production, the journalistic practice, the journalistic subjectivity, and my own personal Danish, scholarly and journalistic situation. This marks the method and the object of my method as always already in process. I want to acknowledge mobility and flexibility in my methodological approach for three reasons. Firstly, researching and analysing journalistic practice and production – as noted above – constantly



draws in and pulls out other modes of political, social, religious and cultural implication. It is a research object in constant flux and process. This obviously poses challenges for the analytical project, as the object of analysis can have changed overnight, so to speak, for instance, if a website is changed, a new president elected or a blogger prosecuted. My methodological answer to the query is the nomadic approach, which needs to be accounted for by its own merits, sustained only through arguments and the experience of the object in-process.

In this case the absent object is whiteness<sup>5</sup>. Its implications are everywhere in the realm of journalistic practice in Nordic societies, and yet it is nowhere to be seen. It is whitened out. In order to recall this absence and non-memory of white power and privilege I adopt a reading which is sensitive to the affects and embodied experiences and realities affecting non-white – othered – subjectivities through the invisibility of white power structures. Secondly, the interdisciplinary theoretical framework within which I position my work anticipates flexibility because of the transversal flux of the disciplinary combinations and commitments, as I discussed it above. Thirdly, as a researcher I impact and affect the object of my investigation continuously. This, I believe, cannot be avoided, only acknowledged and qualified through a sensitised – embodied and embedded – approach.

As mentioned above, journalism is often approached through the disciplinary methodologies of the social sciences, political theory and sociology. These have left journalist subjectivity hanging in the fields of politicising discourses and policies of multinational corporations. By contrast, I come at it from the angle of the humanities. Engaging journalistic practice – which in chapter 2 I define through a critique of the concepts of ‘objectivity’ and ‘freedom of expression’ – with the humanities, and more specifically phenomenological theories, shifts the grounds of how to understand it. In my view, this shift in perspectives also opens up the possibility of a new journalistic practice. I am not only adding a new sociological analysis to the research topic but also introducing it to a different theoretical framework. In this dissertation I argue that seeing journalism as a practice of the humanities evokes a notion of journalism of relation and of an ethical commitment enacted through journalistic subjectivities. In

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<sup>5</sup> I understand whiteness as a power position which works and affects societies, cultures, religions and politics on historical and cultural grounds. See chapter 1 for a full definition.



chapters 1–3 I present this theoretical approach to analyses of journalistic practice from the humanities as a journalism of relation. I present journalism as a privileged site of connectivity and relation by returning accountability to the journalist-subject. This return is conceptualised in terms of understanding the journalistic practice as a production of subjectivity, as a process of power negotiations and agencies.

### *Outline*

In the next three chapters, introducing the theoretical framework in this dissertation, I discuss the phenomenological developments infused by the work of scholars of gender, ‘race’ and whiteness, and through their intersections. Moreover this chapter outlines a concept of European whiteness (chapter 1). I define a theoretical understanding of journalistic practice through a critique of the concepts of ‘objectivity’ and ‘freedom of expression’ and by positioning journalistic practice and production within cultural formation of identity and belonging (chapter 2). Finally, I discuss the cosmopolitan potential of a journalism of relation which understands journalistic subjectivity as a privileged site of connectivity and thus as a site of ethical demands (chapter 3). The method of these first three chapters is both textual and theoretical, in that a range of relevant theories and key terms are introduced, explored and assessed in terms of their relevance to my dissertation topic.

The three case studies present three realms in which Danish journalistic practice has produced a journalistic cultural memory which continues to feed into a ‘them’ and ‘us’ binary or in other ways (re)construct Danish homogeneous whiteness. Case study 1 delves into the relation between Danish non-memory of the colonial past in the West Indies and the West Indian commemoration of emancipation of the Danish slaves as it is represented in journalistic narration. Case study 2 digs deeper into the Danish cultural identity and heritage of whiteness using the Viking imaginary and imagery and connecting it to the genetic social imaginary. Case study 3 assembles the non-memory of ‘them’ and in particular the Danish responsibility for the fate of the Virgin Islanders and the over-emphasised memory of ‘us’ as the white, Viking warriors, in a case study of the controversy over cartoons of the prophet Mohammed. I argue that the cultural, national memory of ‘us’ was in this case connected further to an overarching European ideology, but in the absence of the other as equal, difference was overlooked. The method of the three case studies is based in textual analyses.



Less speculative than the first three chapters, the case studies support and expand the main theoretical hypotheses by different methodological means.

Throughout the theoretical chapters and the case studies I support and develop a complex but coherent argument which, building on concrete experiences of journalistic practices and subjectivities, urges a new understanding of journalistic practice and subjectivities in order to return ethical accountability to the journalist-subjects. This analytical mode is furthermore accompanied by more normative assertions about journalistic practice and production, which affirms the rich and complex potential of journalistic practice today and stresses its relevance for ethical debates on self-other interaction and thus forges a journalism of relation.



## CHAPTER 1:

### 1.1 SITUATING MY THINKING AND MY APPROACH

Marking the fortieth anniversary of the May 1968 ‘revolution’, 2008 was yet another year of re-opening the debates that flourished during this era. The presidential election in the US is a case in point. The message of the presidential candidate for the Democratic party, Barack Obama, recognising that we all ‘share the same destiny’ despite race, gender and class, seems like a re-writing of the Civil Rights Movement’s quest for recognition of the black population in the US and its civil rights. In his speech, particularly on the issue of race in the US<sup>6</sup>, Obama argues that the US Constitution already places emphasis on the equality and rights of all American citizens. There is always room for improvement, however, and the work for unity within and among the people of the US started by leaders like the Rev. Martin Luther King (assassinated 1968) and another Democratic candidate, Robert Kennedy (assassinated 1968), needs to be continued and finished. However, instead of arguing that certain groups should be recognised as such, Obama claims unity in dreams and goals, if not in starting points and means of reaching the goal. That is, Obama acknowledges the cultural, economical, gendered, racial differences within the nation, unified in the aim for a better future.

Another case in point is feminism. Developments in third-wave feminism in the United States as well as in Europe take up the discussions initiated by the ‘second-wave’ feminists some 30 or 40 years ago, and discuss the younger generation’s need to redefine and develop the thoughts of the foremothers but based on the (globalised and mediated) world of today. In the US, writer Ariel Levy (2005) discusses the pornographic representation of sexual desires in the media using the feminist ‘sex wars’ of the 1970s to illuminate the topic. The sex wars were never concluded, Levy argues, and so they are still implicitly pending in the public space where young people confuse women’s liberation with masculine pornofication of female sexuality. The rediscovery of the first feminist wave also results in a more or less radical reassessment of the second wave’s emphasis on sexual freedom and sexual-social emancipation. But the reassessment of the second wave may also result in a

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<sup>6</sup> ‘A more perfect Union’, delivered 18 March 2008.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/03/18/obama-race-speech-read-t\\_n\\_92077.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/03/18/obama-race-speech-read-t_n_92077.html). (accessed 1 Nov. 2008)



generosity which allows for the third wave of feminists to grow from and through the radical lessons learnt. This way the positivity of the generational knowledge production is emphasised by young European feminist scholars such as Iris van der Tuin (2008).

The debates on civil rights for racial minorities and equal rights for women in the 1960s and 1970s aimed at a cultural and political recognition of the differences of minority groups within society. It was a quest for a group identity which would allow for equal rights and change society from within. For a long time these entities have been difficult to think of in unison because one is always awarded priority. The current revival of the 'identity' debates, however, seem to be less about singular and bounded group identities and more about recognising the conjugation of differences within these groups and between these groups. Obama's 'sharing the same destiny' approach can be read as not being about lumping the many diverse cultures, religions and ethnicities of the US into one, but to see the differences in relation to each other in order to understand the common interests and the politics that they may involve. As his wife, Michelle Obama, puts it, it is about how we perceive each other (Gibbs and Newton-Small 2008).

I want to argue that the current cultural (and the corollary political) debates focus on 'relation' rather than 'identity'. Relation has two meanings here: firstly it means a sort of solidarity of differences that forges an understanding and feeling of being 'in this together' (Braidotti 2006). Secondly, it means that focus is turned on to what happens between entities and social networks (people, animals, ecosystems, technology etc.) rather than their impacts on individuals alone. It is, thus, what I – inspired by Glissant (1997) – would term an excess of relation. What happens between entities calls for an understanding of relation as synergy; that we are always more than the sum of our parts. If this sounds like a pep-talk from the globalised corporate world it is not surprising because the corporate world has an interest in these ideas as well. Some call it the Scandinavian Viking model (Strid and Andreasson 2007) and it views businesses as organic entities in which innovation is the goal of collaboration among employees. Though profit is still among the goals of this marketing strategy, the overt consumerist overtones of most businesses today are subdued and emphasis is instead placed on human resources and relations. However, it has a gratuitous political and



poetic counterpart as well. The poetics of relation as Glissant (1997) thinks of it is sensuous excess in the relation to the other of Thought – it is a manner of changing and exchanging. That is, it is a continuous action and affection of subjects mutually changing and affecting each other.

But why begin this chapter with the cultural and political situation in the US during the 2008 presidential election? Firstly, because whether we want to acknowledge it or not the cultural and political power of the US affects European thought and ideas immensely. This is especially pertinent on the issues of race, gender and media, which are the core of this dissertation. The practice of cultural memory is helpful to analyse the impact of the US on European culture and politics. Cultural memory works on national levels on which it draws on historical facts and myths in order to produce a social imaginary of common cultural interests (for instance, the case of Obama invoking the ‘founding fathers’ of the US and the Constitution in his aforementioned speech). The historical element is crucial in the construction of the ‘self’ – be it a national self or another group identity. Cultural memory also works on a larger supra-national and cultural scale and on this level the media plays an enormous role. The visual memory of the Kennedy murder in 1963, the mushroom cloud of the A-bomb, the fall of the Berlin wall, and the 9/11 attack in New York are stored widely in the memory of ‘western’ people due to their great cultural and political significance and also due to the media relaying these pictures. I would moreover venture that Obama’s presidential slogan, ‘Yes, We Can’, will resonate for some time to come and thereby imprint large parts of the ‘western’ world with politico-philosophical ideas of change beyond the domestic politics of the US.

The second reason for mentioning Obama’s speeches and presidential campaign is that, in the case of the self-other relation, traces of the European philosophical tradition of difference seem to be mirrored in the US political debate. The trajectories of the two theoretical traditions which I will be sketching out below are not divided and running parallel to each other, but rather intermingle and affect each other continuously. I want to show that although the US may be only beginning to understand the value of thinking in terms of the perception of the singular other, rather than in cultural and political group formations, and although the Europeans may politically be going in the absolute opposite direction at this point in time, there is the



possibility of making room for a cultural and political debate on these new terms of relation.

What I am trying to identify here is an epistemological, ethical and political shift in debates of cultural and political ideas of relation between self and other. The epistemological shift means a new way of situating the self when associating with the other. Epistemologically a new knowledge production is made available and the aim is to acknowledge the legitimacy of the new knowledge about how history, culture and politics intermingle and are exchanged. This, moreover, potentially produces and introduces new cultural memories. As the terms of the debates shift away from the presumption of stable groups of identities to help orient the self, ethically the knowledge of relations emanating from the debates claims flexibility in interaction and reference to the other. This is not thought of in the sense of another group or another identity, but in the sense of another subjectivity. It includes recognition of responsibility and openness towards the other as a subject that changes and exchanges the self continuously. Politically the redefinition of the self-other relation calls for solidarity of differences and for emphasis on accessing the excess of relations, which I defined above with the help of Glissant (1997). When the self-other relation is defined through solidarity and synergy, or excess between the self and the multiple others, the parameters of democratic cosmopolitanism need to be determined not in terms of overarching moral humanity but in terms of singular relations of difference as well. Cosmopolitanism has to give up its idea of global humanity based on sameness, to which I will return in chapter 3.

On all three levels of this shift, journalistic practice and theory have a part to play. I have already mentioned the role of the media in producing and sustaining cultural memory and I want to unfold this a bit in the following. Traditionally journalism is understood to have two major functions in society; educational or informational, and as the watchdog of democracy exposing corruption and abuse of power. These two functions fit nicely with the epistemological and the political claims of both the centrality of self-other interaction and the shift in self-other relation. Epistemologically the change is in the information relayed through journalistic means and it consists of telling a different story and following another narrative from various new angles. But journalism holds on to traditions of the trade which may contest



attempts to tell a different story. For instance, there is the concept of ‘objectivity’ which the journalist assumes is obtainable if certain ways of doing journalism are followed. In this dissertation, and in more theoretical detail in the following chapter, I will therefore deconstruct ‘objectivity’ as a concept in order to open a space for journalists to position themselves more self-reflexively in relation to the story they are telling and the audience for which they are writing. The fact that journalists hold a subject position in connection to the story they are telling and the society they are portraying is neglected in the concept of ‘objectivity’. I will critique this failure to situate the journalistic subjectivity using feminist theories of situated knowledges and African-American and postcolonial theories derived from and developing the tradition of phenomenology. Moreover, I find it imperative that journalism’s function as watchdog should be coupled analytically with the function of nation-building in a political reading of the journalistic position in (relation to) society. The modern idea of the nation grew with the trade of journalism in the late nineteenth century, so the watchdog function is ambiguous. The ethical question of whose nation journalism is protecting and sustaining is pertinent. The cultural memory supporting the idea of the nation which is built on the idea of unity and homogeneity may necessarily exclude the citizens or non-citizens who ‘stick out’ in terms of culture, ‘race’, religion etc. It is therefore crucial to take a look at who the journalists are in terms of gender and ethnicity and also whom journalists speak for and to whose voices they lend air-time and pages in the journalistic production. The concept of ‘freedom of speech’, which is common to the national democratic state and to journalism, will need to be questioned. This is an ethical questioning, pointing toward the recognition and the role of the other.

Implicit in the claims I made above is a critique of the dominant assumptions about subjectivity. The new terms of the debate bring with them the necessity of critiquing the otherwise invisible hegemonic cultural and political whiteness of the ‘western’ worldview. Despite the redefinition of identification – as a process of identity making and a feeling of national and group belonging – and subjectivity in terms of difference rather than group belonging, the ultimate other to the hegemonic cultural and political ideas in the ‘western’ world is still marked by race and gender. This is evident in political debates in the US and Europe, where racial or ethnic otherness is in focus in the development of migration policies and intermingled with issues of the female role



of this otherness. In Europe the many and diverse national debates about the wearing of the Moslem *hijab* or *niqab* testify to this political usage of female bodies and I will unfold these ideas and debates later on in this chapter. The implied ‘neutral’ position in culture as well as in politics is still assumed to be the white male. In journalism as well the political debates are not only summarised but the stories selected for publication are likewise tinted in the light of ‘gender and race questions’ and relations. Thus the traditional journalistic subject position is also implicitly assumed to be white and male. In academia, research in women’s studies and gender, and postcolonial studies have been critiquing this position for decades. The research is now moving into a new wave of interdisciplinary approaches and so encompasses global issues and politics, further developing ideas of the other and situated knowledges. As a way of illuminating the issue of the self-other relation in this chapter, I will use the intersection of gender and race with white ‘neutrality’ as a prototype for discussing how the interrelationship is theorised and could potentially be theorised and practised in new ways.

This dissertation focuses on the journalistically practised and mediated self-other relation in the contemporary cultural and political space of Denmark. As part of the ‘western’ world, Denmark’s journalistic endeavours and explorations reflect and engage the cultural memory and thus the hegemonic self-image, the social imaginary<sup>7</sup>, of the country and to some extent of its ‘western’ neighbours. Positioning myself in a European tradition of what may be called philosophies of experience – that is, philosophies that place emphasis on the embodiment of knowledge and the subjectivity of experience – I pay particular attention to the practice and production, in Raymond Williams’s use of the word, of journalistic participation in re- and de-constructing cultural memories and feelings of national, cultural, ethnic and religious belonging. In the present chapter and the chapters that follow I will set up a framework of references dealing with the issues introduced above. Firstly, I present a number of debates that challenge the claimed universality and objectivity of white ‘western’ culture and politics. This critique emerges from African-American scholars and white feminists alike, although the two have difficulties combining their respective positions and knowledge claims. Moreover, African-American women

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<sup>7</sup> I will return to this concept and my use of it together with the concept of cultural memory in chapter 2.



have called for recognition of the particularities of their situation of belonging to both categories. Secondly, I relate these debates to the societal and productive context of contemporary European and ‘western’ globalised and mediated culture and politics. I re-define journalism as the theory and practice of production of cultural memory and social imaginaries of gendered, ethnic, religious, national and racial differences. On the basis of this practised and productive journalism, I rework ideas of cosmopolitanism from universal reproductions of sameness into creative productions of singular self-other relations. The case studies which follow all portray different selected aspects of this journalistically-mediated self-other relation and through them I argue for a creatively productive turn in journalism based in new journalistic subjectivities.

## 1.2 PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE GENDER AND ‘RACE’ CRITICS

Returning to Mrs Obama for a moment and taking into account her statement that the cultural debates are about perception of the other, I want to emphasise the crucial importance of perception and turn towards theories that can help me understand the term and thus assess its relevance to the theme of this dissertation. This leads me immediately to phenomenology in the European tradition. Perception is at the core of phenomenological philosophy. Phenomenology takes a first-person’s view to the material world of phenomena and so places personal perception and experience of the world as a focal point through which knowledge is produced. Because of the focus on personal perception, the tradition has been criticised for being ultimately ego-centred (Andermahr, Lovell, Wolkowitz 2000). However further engagement with phenomenological thinking reveals the tradition of theorising about relations between consciousnesses as well. Here I will present developments within the tradition that emphasise differences of experiences. A strand of thinking within this approach thus deals with phenomenological ethics particularly in relation to the other.

### *1.2.1 Merleau-Ponty, de Beauvoir and Fanon*

Phenomenology is the study of the essences of consciousness grounded in experience. Because in phenomenology body and mind are implicated with each other, in that the mind is always already embodied and perception is sensory experiences, it is thus a philosophy which presupposes thought in experience and in existence. ‘The world is not what I think, but what I live through’ (Merleau-Ponty 2007: xviii). Perception to



Merleau-Ponty is the presupposition of all acts. Epistemologically, phenomenology does away with scientific objectivity because of the understanding that the self is always subjective and implicated in the world. Objects can only be perceived from an angle. Moreover, the self is always implicated and affected by the world and the other. The body is always simultaneously an object (to others) and a lived reality (for the subject), but it is never simply one or the other (Grosz 1994). Experience is in-between. It is because of the other that the self discovers the possibility of an 'outside spectator' – the self as an object to others – which posits the self's consciousness as a 'consciousness among consciousness' (Merleau-Ponty 2007: xiv). This places the body in a pivotal position because the body is defined by its relations to other objects and defines and gives meaning to objects through these relations (Grosz 1994).

These relationships are moreover influenced by power relations. Scholars of gender and of race remind us that the perception of the body as an object and a corollary by the subject differs according to the gender and race of the object/subject. Thus one is not born a woman; one becomes a woman, as Simone de Beauvoir (1997) made obvious. That is, the position and perception of 'woman' is interpellating and constructing female gendered beings into realising and becoming a particular subjectivity according to the prevalent scheme of the world. This specific embodied condition of these beings, namely their being gendered, racialised or in other ways marked by difference, is not irrelevant to the social schemes they end up implementing. They are necessary but not sufficient conditions for their socialisation process. Patriarchy is that particular scheme in the 'western' world that brands female as feminine and male as masculine, is the claim of feminists following de Beauvoir. The gender binaries are oppositional but also complementary. They uphold sets of rights and social entitlements that are neither equitable, nor even-handed, the balance of power being clearly biased in favour of the masculine. Whiteness is another dominant feature of the scheme, Franz Fanon asserts. Just as the gendered power balance favours masculinity, in the racialised power balance, whiteness is favoured over non-whiteness. To Fanon, the fact of blackness constructs the black man in a 'third person's consciousness' (Fanon 1967: 110) in which he is forced to see himself as an object – as if through the eyes of the white man. The power relations that make up a differentiated experience of non-whites and non-males occur in a socially and historically conditioned context (Gibson 2003). To white women and to black people



the perception of the self (as a subject) and the perception by others (as an object) present conflicting sites. Women and black people are walled in by social and historical circumstances, such as patriarchy and colonialism. It is ‘a walling that is multidimensional – political, economic, social, cultural, and spatial’ (Gibson 2003: 135).

Phenomenology opens up the possibility of conceptualising difference in social, economic, political, cultural and religious spaces and is thus exactly about how we perceive each other as others. Phenomenology is not an epistemological claim alone but carries within it ethical and political implications, to which I will return shortly.

### *1.2.2 Young and Butler*

Developing the tension between the self and the other – the self as object and subject – feminism provides an analysis which questions the legitimacy of phenomenological claim of consciousness and perception. Perception, according to Merleau-Ponty, is the background of all acts and the philosopher needs to step outside this perception – misunderstand the common sense interpretations of the social reality – in order to make it apparent. But what if this perception is not common sense to all? According to many feminist philosophers, Merleau-Ponty avoids the question of the sexual(ised) other (Grosz 1994: 103). This poses a problem to feminists and gender scholars because it is exactly the sexual difference and experience of sexed lives which is at the base of feminist thinking on difference. Iris Marion Young (2003) takes her cue from phenomenology and reverses the gendered experience. Having breasts poses a conundrum to the phenomenological conception of experience, Young argues, because the ‘normalized breast hardly describes an “average” around which real women’s breasts cluster’ (Young 2003: 154). This brings about a schism between the experiences of having breasts and the objectification of breasts and the following perception of female bodies. The double vision of the breasted experience ultimately supports a sexist notion of female subjects. Instead Young proposes a women-centred meaning in which breasts are de-objectified and de-sexualised to become a factor in the facticity of some bodies. Young’s proposal assumes somewhat categorical gender identities in which a woman-centred meaning-making necessarily would de-sexualise breasts, i.e., ‘female sexuality’ is far removed and fundamentally different from ‘male sexuality’. In Merleau-Ponty’s thinking, ‘experience’ is not relegated to an



unchangeable and static realm and so it cannot be taken unproblematically as a source for truth (Grosz 1994: 94). Though it is surely not the intention of Young to fix a female identity to the experience of having breasts, her theorisation seems dichotomising for that reason. Much more could be said about this embodied identification; however it is not my task to do so in this chapter.

Taking de Beauvoir's claim that gender is a historical and social construction, Judith Butler develops her feminist reading of Merleau-Ponty by emphasising the objectification and the subject's complicity in this construction in 'the act'.

One is not simply a body, but, in some key sense, one does one's body and, indeed, one does one's body differently from one's contemporaries and from one's embodied predecessors and successors as well. (Butler 1997: 404)

Butler expands on the concept of 'the act' stating that: 'The body is not passively scripted with cultural codes, as if it were lifeless recipient of wholly pregiven relations' (Butler 1997: 410). Rather, the '[a]ctors are always already on the stage, within the terms of the performance' (Butler 1997: 410). This sense of 'the act' makes possible a transformation of the social conditions, Butler argues. It becomes a matter of changing the social conditions rather than changing the individual acts which spring from those conditions (Butler 1997: 409). Butler's phenomenological understanding of the social is a hegemonic construction of compulsory heterosexuality and the politics of performative gender acts function in order to 'expose the reifications that tacitly serve as substantial gender cores or identities' (Butler 1997: 414) and to question the foundations on which these reifications rest. Butler argues for a politics of difference, which does not reinstate or fortify the binaries of 'man' and 'woman'. To Butler 'man' and 'woman' are not essential entities but performances re-instating and re-constituting the imaginary of those entities continuously. Butler's theory of performativity shoots the concept of 'agency' in which power is asserted through actions in a discursive manner, into traditional phenomenology. However, performativity leaves internal activities of emotional, intellectual and sensorial experiences undeveloped. Butler's theory of performativity seem to presuppose that subjects are in total control of their affections and desires and



the theory thus leaves little room for the other to impact and inflict the self's subjectivity.

### *1.2.3 Alcoff and Ahmed*

Through the experience of having a Latina-white background, the feminist phenomenological philosopher, Linda Martín Alcoff, argues for a 'double consciousness' in line with the argument made by W.E.B. DuBois (1903). 'Double consciousness' is an ability to see one's ethnoracial self from the perspective of the other as well as from one's own experienced perspective. Alcoff follows phenomenological structures of thinking in that she argues that ethnoracial identity is sustained through common-sensical and 'everyday consciousness discernible in practices' (Alcoff 2006: 185). Ethnoracial common sense, then, moreover takes its place in the Foucauldian discursive power structures – originating from below as well as top-down. Foucault's notion of power is related to subjectivity as a continuous process of acting and being acted upon and it splits into a twofold idea of power; *potesta*, which is the top-down power of exclusion of the racial other and *potentia*, which is a 'technology of the self' (Foucault 1982, Braidotti 1996) and the process of subjectivity. *Potesta* is the normalising process which ethnic minority positions assume in order to function in the 'white' world, but simultaneously the discursive practices of perceiving and being perceived as other constitutes the *potentia* of the ethnic 'double consciousness'. It is the presuppositions of everyday practices as well as institutional exclusions that are the backdrop for the ethnoracial differentiations and which simultaneously constitute and uphold them.

Important to the ambition of upholding this common-sense behaviour of people is the visibility of race, Alcoff argues. Though '[t]he criteria thought to determine racial identity have ranged from ancestry, experience, self-understanding, to habits and practices, yet these sources are coded through visible inscriptions on the body' (Alcoff 2006: 191). Therefore Alcoff understands our task to be to make apparent the racist common-sense and stereotyping practices of visibility in order to alter the connotative meanings attached to visible differences (Alcoff 2006: 194).



Following Alcoff, the Pakistani-British<sup>8</sup> professor of cultural studies, Sara Ahmed (2007), nuances the theoretical approach further by introducing the concepts of ‘distance’ and ‘proximity’ in relation to the reach of whiteness and through respectively ‘orientated’ or ‘phenomenal’ approaches to others. Whiteness, Ahmed asserts, operates through an orientation *towards* the other, which upholds a distance from the other. Phenomenology opens a space for orienting oneself *around* the world (Ahmed 2007: 112-15) and in this way becoming a part of this world and orientation (Ahmed 2007: 116). As part of the phenomenological relation to the world it is – also in Ahmed’s view – the interaction, the common sense, which upholds the ethnoracial classifications and orientations. The collectiveness – through common reading, learning etc. – of orientation towards an object makes that object what it is, Ahmed argues. Thus ethnoracial identification and classification is about collectiveness and repetition. Additionally, and following Merleau-Ponty, Ahmed asserts that whiteness enables us to encompass that which is within reach into the bodily experience. The other becomes an extension of the white self (Ahmed 2007: 131). In order to overcome such an objectifying embrace, Ahmed suggests an orientation *around* rather than *toward* the other and the world in order for a connectivity to arise. An orientation *around* the world relates to thinking one’s self as a part of the world and this in turn generates proximity. In this vein Ahmed argues that ‘likeness is an effect of proximity rather than its cause’ (Ahmed 2007: 123). Bringing objects into proximity has a queering effect that arranges things out of line and so out of reach – understood as the extension of whiteness. What is needed in Ahmed’s view is a reorientation of whiteness *around* the world (Ahmed 2007: 155). This reorientation, though, comes with a feeling of discomfort – of being out of line, in the sense of being queered. Ahmed’s view shares similarities with Paul Gilroy’s (2004) concept of ‘estrangement’, which endows people with the ability to step outside their privileged positions and recall themselves as part of a larger scheme and world.<sup>9</sup> Whereas Alcoff focuses on the visibility of the other and the distinction of whiteness to be named, Ahmed focuses on the shareability of the world and the proximity and distance of the other in our perception of the world. Ahmed’s proposition is thus an affirmation of potentiality, whereas the identity politics of Alcoff seem in comparison to leave the world and its power structures reversed but ultimately unaltered.

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<sup>8</sup> Both Alcoff and Ahmed use their double ethnic experience to understand the relation with the other.

<sup>9</sup> I will return to Gilroy’s ideas of estrangement and cosmopolitanism in the following chapter.



### 1.3 CULTURAL APPROACHES AND USAGES OF PHENOMENOLOGY

The discussion above makes clear that the Merleau-Pontian sense of perception is challenged in phenomenological work and debates on intersections of differentiated experiences. In the following I will explore the debates emerging from these tensions among experiences. These are not philosophical approaches and theories but politically charged cultural and academic debates. However, they share with phenomenological thought topics of the body as a site for experience and identification situated in the world; the idea of experience as source of knowledge; the shifting and impacting position of the other; and ideas of the role played by memory in collectively generated experiences. Positions within this spectrum of ideas are transposed from debate to debate and emerge as sites of dispute. I investigate debates on ‘whiteness’ and ‘gender’ as they play out mainly in the US scholarship and, following that, in the European scholarship. This division is made because racial issues and issues of otherness play out differently in different contexts and because I want to acknowledge the primacy of the African-American scholars’ work on whiteness and their critique of white ‘western’ feminism. However, it is a very constructed sort of division because of the common cultural memory of the ‘western’ world of popular representations and politics. The authors are selected on the grounds of their internal debates and their diversities as well as their relevance to the argumentation.

#### *1.3.1 African-American critique of white feminism*

The particularities of the critical scholarship on whiteness emerging out of the US are based on a threefold vision of otherness connected to Native Americans, slavery, and recent migration, such as from South America and Asia. Most prominently featured is scholarship on African-American experience – and this is also where my emphasis lies. In what follows I will present some of the US feminist theorists on the topic of race and gender in order to discuss the theories’ relation to experience and knowledge production. I will explore the theoretical tensions that are found in the US in the binaries and in the persistent hierarchy of white and black experience as well as in the emphasis placed on gender or race. Moreover, I want to argue that identity politics in the sense of identity as a point of enunciation is prevalent in the US-based theories, though not absolute.



African Americans have a long history of theorising and imagining whiteness in the US. The author bell hooks recalls how whiteness in black imaginary has been connected to ‘the mysterious, the strange and the terrible’ (hooks 1998: 39), and how whiteness and white cultural domination has left a notion of whiteness as terror in all black people. In *Black Looks* (1998), hooks recaptures the look of African American to the European (or Anglo)<sup>10</sup> American, and uses memory to name whiteness in the black imagination. It is a representation of terror, and white people are terrorists, killers, rapists, ghosts, and death.<sup>11</sup> Exploring this representation, hooks argues that the socially and politically enforced white projection of the image of the terrorist other onto black people makes an awareness of the representation of white as terror impossible to whites. However, it is this representation which all black people in the US experience, indifferently of their status, class and other background, hooks asserts, and as such it functions as a collective memory. The aim of hooks is to understand blackness through the deconstruction of the imagination of white as terror, and in order for white people to become part of this exercise, white people have to shift positions, raise their levels of consciousness and develop the skills needed to be able to see themselves and their culture as terrorising.

Contemporary with hooks’ important work, Nobel Prize laureate Toni Morrison, in her bestselling book, *Playing in the Dark. Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1993), analyses the repeated occurrences of whiteness in American literature. Morrison also finds whiteness to have deep roots in the American identity. ‘American means white’, she states (Morrison 1993: 47), and this pervasive but unacknowledged and therefore structurally invisible racialisation may be something the American self-image cannot do without. That is, American whiteness is constructed upon and simultaneously denies its other in order to sustain a cultural, political and economical

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<sup>10</sup> I will return to the problematic of labelling white Americans ‘European Americans’.

<sup>11</sup> This is a representation which Dyer (1997) also elaborates on equating white with death through analysis of Hollywood movie productions. White people not only look dead by virtue of their (lack of) colour, they also bring death (Dyer 1997: 209). Dyer then uses the example of the vampire, which is the living dead feeding on others’ life force: blood. Vampires, like white people, are living through the consumption of others. Death is moreover glorified and yearned after in much nineteenth-century literature and art. Thus, the white death is represented as being decadently European, but white death is also claimed in the name of rationality and pseudo-scientific race-selection in, for example, the Nazi death camps because: ‘Who else could put all those people into ovens *scientifically*’ (Lorraine Hansberry, quoted in hooks (1998:44)).



power structure privileging white skin and culture. Moreover, as an American phenomenon, whiteness is founded on the historical subjugation of black people, which lays the groundwork for a continued social, political and economical inequality between white and black. Whiteness is as such a power tool to impose on – originally – African slaves in order to establish and stay in power, but sustained through, among other things, cultural and political products and discourses in literary productions, Morrison asserts.

To Morrison and hooks, white women play an equal part in this subjugation and continue to do so through cultural reproductions (hooks 1998) and through their literary work (Morrison 1993). When the representation of whiteness intersects with the representation of gender, Morrison's analyses of literary representations focus mainly on the white masculinity embedded in the metaphors and narrative structures of classic novels. Morrison lets the gendered female experience fall in the background when the issue of race enters the stage. On the other hand, hooks analyses the pop singer Madonna as a white female icon constructed as a 'bad girl' because of her affiliation with blackness. On Madonna's music video 'Like a Prayer', hooks writes:

No article [about the video] called attention to the fact that Madonna flaunts her sexual agency by suggesting that she is breaking the ties that bind her as a white girl to white patriarchy, and establishing ties with black men. She, however, and not the black men, does the choosing. The message is directed at white men. It suggests that they only labelled black men rapists in fear that white girls would choose black partners over them. (hooks 1998: 312).

Madonna is described by hooks as a parasite on the symbolism of blackness and in that constellation the fact that she is a woman matters little. Whereas Madonna's gender situates her in a particular hierarchical relation to black people, it is primarily her whiteness that gives her agency over black men – as well as women. Here, hooks is arguing that Madonna is merely reproducing and playing with the old stereotype and power structure of white men and white women respectively placed above black men and black women in the racist/sexist hierarchy.



In Patricia Hill Collins' *Black Feminist Thought. Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (1990), gender and feminism are made explicit and held in a more balanced relation. Hill Collins argues for a particular black feminist standpoint supported by lived experiences particular to black women. The grounding of the theory in the body of black women makes clear the value of self-definition and identity politics. Hill Collins tries to break down the hierarchy by ignoring it. Black women should not be defined through or as opposed to white women or black and white men, because black female experience and black feminist thought and knowledge production is different from the mainstream white feminism, Hill Collins argues.

Though studies and politics of African-American culture have been around as long as women's studies and feminism<sup>12</sup>, it was not until the 1980s and early 1990s that black feminism was defined as such. Primarily African-American scholarship, attempting to analyse several layers of experience simultaneously, was developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1995) as *intersectionality*. This approach looks at the levels of experience of gender, race, class as well as their convergences and intersections. 'Black feminism' or 'womanism' is seen to have developed in relation to African-Americanist criticism and Anglo-American or European American feminist criticism (Andemar, Lowell, Wolkowitz 1997), so the field has been intersectional from the beginning. But 'Black feminism' or 'womanism' is also founded on an opposition to white hegemony and power of definition, i.e., encompassing 'white feminism'. It is a form of resistance towards the hegemonic white, masculine (way of) thinking: a way of putting the African-American person in the *personal* when speaking about the personal being the political in the feminist tradition.

Hill Collins' strategy positions black intellectuals in opposition to other groups of intellectuals. Internalising certain common 'black, female' experiences, she can be said to feed into a black/white symbolism – a 'them' and 'us' dichotomy, which constructs undiversified and stereotyped groups. Hill Collins' approach can be compared to that which Chandra Talpade Mohanty, in 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist

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<sup>12</sup> If not longer; both the struggle for racial equal rights and women's rights started in the US with the abolitionist struggle – which came first is hard to determine, though, and perhaps slightly irrelevant in this context.



Scholarship and Colonial Discourses' (1991) calls the western feminist academics' construction of discursive 'third world women', which is achieved by maintaining that there is one patriarchal power, which suppresses all women in all countries. White feminists hereby force women from so-called third world countries into the hegemonic monolithic and homogenising discourse, which furthermore produces a static image of the 'the third world woman'. This way the category 'woman' is always already placed as one fixed and uniform group upholding the simplistic opposition of men and women. This 'third world woman' exists within a stereotype which forms a mirror to the western woman's self-image. This is done to clarify the western woman's perception of herself as being modern, liberated etc.<sup>13</sup>, Mohanty argues. In the case of Hill Collins' African-American female experience and knowledge production, the stereotype is taken up and developed in an African-American scope, which accentuates the black female experience in a kind of 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak). However, the binary position of black versus white (Hill Collins) or 'third world' versus 'first world' (Mohanty) remains unchanged.

Obviously, neither Morrison, hooks, Mohanty nor Hill Collins choose arbitrarily the opposition of black and white. It is a longstanding 'western', white and to some extent masculine tradition to define oneself in opposition to the other, the 'blackened' and the 'backwards'. It is a well-established dichotomy, which Hill Collins plays on in reverse, arguing that uncontrollability and blackness equals *good*, and control and whiteness equals *bad* in epistemological as well as moral terms. Whereas whiteness is represented as a symbolic power position – little to do with the actual colour of people, the experience of blackness shared by African Americans seem to create a common knowledge and culture as theorised by Hill Collins, for instance. But the colour-line discourse does not necessarily have to end up in antagonistic positions and hierarchies. Angela Davis (2005) has shown that within the history of education a cross-racial sisterhood has emerged, though it remains an under-examined topic.

Recent scholarship (Shohat 2003, Alcoff 2006) has diversified the debates considerably in ways that question the concept of 'blackness' and its many shades in the US context. Often US theorists refrain from dealing with the power structures

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<sup>13</sup> This structure of opposition and self identification will be discussed further below when I present the debates on Islam and feminism.



within the group of black feminists, within the group of African Americans in general, or between groups of different ethnic origins such as South American, Asian or Native American. This means that the theories tend to reproduce a rather dichotomous way of thinking in black-white, as well as maintaining the notion of whiteness as simultaneously *nothing* and *invisibly everything* (Dyer 1997). It has even led white feminist Catherine MacKinnon (1997) to argue that positioning white and black women as opposites is to buy into the white male stereotype constructed around white femininity as being innocent and available to men at all times. That is, 'whiteness' as a power structure should not imply white women, because such an argument neglects to acknowledge the oppression of white women. MacKinnon believes that feminism in general – and here she encompasses African-American feminists' engagement in the feminist movement – is based on diversity between and within women and female experiences. Her strong opinion nevertheless assumes a given priority to anti-sexism rather than anti-racism. The intervention thus calls for a questioning of the ability of MacKinnon's brand of feminism to critique its own ranks and Mohanty's (1991) critique of white feminism seems apt here. So though much feminist and intersectional work aims at dissolving the binaries it is not always easily achieved.

Still other US theorists challenge the black-white binary in order to make room for a 'third voice'. Blanche Radford Curry is one of these voices and in her essay, 'Whiteness and Feminism: Déjà Vu Discourses, What's Next?' (2003), Curry takes as a starting point the criticism laid at white feminists' door for mirroring and repeating the structures of white men in, for instance, academia and in the workplace. In order for feminists/womanists (Curry divides white and black theorists thus) to develop a new and better epistemology, difference has to be taken seriously as part of a humanistic project. However, while arguing for a democratised standpoint of epistemology, Curry seems to argue that some standpoints are better than others and some should be abolished altogether. Curry envisions a '*third* womanist/feminist voice, which is comprehensive in insight and possesses a moral ethos to do the right thing, [and] will be able to effect the goal of a better world order for everyone' (Curry 2003: 258). To accomplish this third voice, more theorising and more praxis, interaction and contact is needed, she argues. However, Curry re-enacts the binary positions, which she seeks to undo by referring to 'white feminists' versus 'black



womanists'. Like Hill Collins, she re-establishes the binary only with the hierarchy turned upside-down.

Another attempt to destabilise this binary comes from US Latino/a theories and scholarship on Asian-American experience. Here I will return to the work of Linda Martín Alcoff to illustrate this part of the US scholarship. I will focus on Alcoff's latest work, *Visible Identities* (2006), and in particular her work on 'the whiteness question' (1998, 2006).

Linda Martín Alcoff makes clear early in her chapter on whiteness and visible identities that '*some of the time, in some respects, whites emphasise and identify with nonwhites, abhor social injustice of white supremacy, and are willing to make significant sacrifices towards the eradication of white privilege*' (Alcoff 2004: 206, italics in the original). Significantly Alcoff uses the term 'white privileges' rather than 'whiteness' to describe – I think more accurately – the condition of white racism and supremacy. Thus Alcoff seems to see whiteness in a more complex light than, for instance, Curry. Whereas Curry describes whiteness in terms of power relations only, Alcoff acknowledges the multiplicity at stake: whiteness needs to be analysed in terms of class, gender and anti-racist struggles as well as an identity politics of white people, which needs to be taken into account when talking about abolition or rehabilitation – transformation – of whiteness. Alcoff poses the question which seems to escape many theorists about whiteness: what should white people do? To answer this question, Alcoff rehearses three US-based exercises and political strategies, which may serve as examples of white subversive behaviour. Finally, as mentioned above, drawing on the work by amongst others Paul Gilroy, Alcoff suggests a white double consciousness, which will remember both the racist and anti-racist legacy of the European past: 'The Michelangelos stand beside the Christopher Columbus, and Michael Moores next to Pat Buchanans' (Alcoff 2006: 223). Both Curry and Alcoff base their thoughts of change in the individual's racial identity. With a certain location of birth and a certain set of parents come certain qualities – or these qualities are imposed on the subject from a society acknowledging the importance of birthplace and parents. However, I want to argue that identity politics such as this limit the ideas of change as well as ideas of subjectivity by over-categorising and fixing identities and options of actions.



In a call for a new way of thinking about experience, Alcoff distinguishes between biologically determined identities and historico-economics determined identities. Gender, age and bodily disabilities belong to the first category, which is defined by a 'material infra-structure' (Alcoff 2006: 164-6), whereas race, ethnicity, culture and religion belong to the latter, culturally contextual category. This distinction is based on the fact that reproduction after all is a quality of the physical basis, which women possess and which is valued in society. In contrast, the category to which 'race' belongs has no such quality – and racism is therefore founded in historical and political structures alone. Alcoff denies that this division holds an argument for a hierarchy of oppressions. She finds that the identity categories are intersecting and mediated through each other – i.e., changing one category will change others as well. But the distinction may prove slightly synthetic as other lines of division easily prove just as manageable. Alcoff's own emphasis on the visibility of identities (Alcoff 2006) especially may serve as a division separating gender, race, age and disability from less visible identities, such as religion and ethnicity. Moreover, it becomes hard to conceive of a place that fits black women, who by Alcoff's rationale, both possess potential agency by virtue of being female and are without potential agency by virtue of being black.

The categories suggested by Alcoff illustrate the tension between gender as a potential agency and race as an always already subjugated position needing resolving. The division also explains Alcoff's theory of change based on identity politics referred to earlier in this chapter. And finally Alcoff's problematic categorisation shows that it is very challenging indeed to find a diversified and inclusive approach to critical race and whiteness studies and feminism using identity-based theories.

### *1.3.2 Anti-racist (white) feminists*

Up until now I have mainly been presenting theorists dealing with whiteness from an othered position, but white US feminists have also joined the debate. In 1988, Peggy McIntosh, a white woman academic, listed fifty points of white privilege modelled on her feminist work and her knowledge of masculine privilege. McIntosh writes:



Thinking through unacknowledged male privilege as a phenomenon with a life of its own, I realized that since hierarchies in our society are interlocking, there was most likely a phenomenon of white privilege which was similarly denied and protected, but alive and real in its effects (McIntosh 1997).

McIntosh is very explicit about the structural similarities between ‘white feminism’s’ critique of patriarchy and a critique of racism. She also underlines, though, that the privileges of white people, men, able-bodied people, young people etc. are not similar but interlocking. In contrast to hooks’ collective memory of African Americans, McIntosh’s list is a collective *non*-memory of white people; an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank cheques (McIntosh 1997), which through awareness can be re-valued and re-distributed amongst all the citizens of the US. In other words, the privileging content of the knapsack needs to be re-distributed among black people as well as white. It is important, however, to realise that not all of McIntosh’s fifty privileges are privileges in the sense of advantages, but merely norms, which mislead white people into believing that they live in a meritocracy, where everybody has the same opportunities in life based on their individual abilities etc. Though McIntosh’s list addresses the heteronormativity of whiteness and white privileges, none of the privileges on the list address the intersection of her female experience with that of white experience.

McIntosh believes that to gain awareness you need to give up the ‘myth of meritocracy’ and furthermore you have to exert a will to change. It is a re-evaluation of the white identity through changing experiences, knowledge and lived reality McIntosh along with other theorists (Curry 2004, Sullivan 2006) call for. However, the assumption that white people are able to change their experience of the world by, for instance, moving to a less white neighbourhood is based on a white middle-class premise, i.e., the choice of lifestyle involved assumes a certain economic class and thereby options. I think that this premise needs to be questioned and the issue of class needs to be introduced in order for McIntosh’s analysis to gain depth.

### *1.3.3 European scholarship*



I have discussed first the issue of white and black knowledge claims and its connections to experience, which has called for counter-hegemonic positions (hooks, Hill Collins) as well as stances believing feminism to be diversified and diversifying by default (MacKinnon). Second, I have discussed the issue of gender versus race, which time and again is revived as an either-or position in the debates and as the issue of the stereotypical white woman and her powerful position and agency in the racist/sexist hierarchy. Finally, it seems to be difficult to change these oppressive power structures. I want to suggest that this difficulty may be founded in the static binary and in the terms used to designate 'whiteness'.

In much of the critical debate on whiteness, the term 'Euro-American' or 'European American' has been used to describe 'whiteness' or 'white people'. This is done to designate the specificity rather than the norm of whiteness (Frankenberg 1997). However, Ruth Frankenberg points out that the term also "deracializes" and thus falsely equalizes communities who are, in terms of current reality, unequally positioned in the racial order' (Frankenberg 1997: 632). To this critique of the term I want to add – along with Gail Lewis (2006) – that this term of course is highly problematic especially when transported into a critical European context, as it suggests that Europeans are all white and belonging to a certain 'civilisation'. It seems that the insistence on the term Euro- or European American feeds into the binary as well as keeping Europe in a political space and social reality fixed as merely a symbolic and negative power position, disregarding the multilayeredness of its geography, cultures, religions, histories, and ethnicities etc. While recent scholarship has diversified the 'black' experience to encompass indigenous people, Latino/as and Asians etc. 'white' experience is supposed to be simultaneously an a-historical (i.e., given a symbolic 'everything and nothing' status) and a historical construct, related only to European colonial and imperial power positions and fantasies. Critical European theory on whiteness in this discourse becomes very hard to conceive of. It has moreover been argued that whiteness theories would make more sense as theories of 'dominant ethnicity' (Kaufmann 2006). However, below I will argue, with Goldberg (1993), that a more helpful term would acknowledge both the racial structures of ethnicity and the ethnic features of racism – thus I opt for the terms 'ethnorace' or 'ethnoracial'. More on this to follow.



The functioning of identity politics argued by most of the race theorists – though mainly exemplified by Alcoff and Curry in this chapter – furthermore makes change impossible within a (diversified but) white context, because experiences are kept to a private level. That is, I can personally change my ‘white’ experience and thus change my relations to others (more or less readily, depending, for instance, on my class background), but politically identity politics are slow-moving factors in a highly economically- and politically-charged social reality. As discussed above the subjectivity or agency of the individual is stagnated in a fixed structure with limited possibilities of change.<sup>14</sup> I want to suggest consequently that what is needed is a theoretical route beyond the dichotomy of black-white discourses and beyond identity politics in order to develop a critical framework of whiteness in a European context.

As the US race theories are marked by centuries of fighting and imprisoning Native Americans, slavery and South American migration, European history provides two main historical elements of racial oppression and subjugation. The first one is colonialism, which crudely speaking was based on military, political, economical and cultural power, and fascism, which moreover can be said to be based on eugenics – racial selection and industrial-scale extermination. However, the two historical epochs and their implications intermingle and blend and I will treat them in indistinct paragraphs in the following section.

#### *1.3.4 Fascism, Colonialism, Euro-centrism*

The two tensions originating from the US theories – the black-white binary leaving European identity in a white, immobile space, and the either-or relation between race and gender aspects – are readily recognisable in a European contemporary and colonial context as well. European debates on colonial slavery owe much especially to the US theorists such as Toni Morrison and bell hooks, and many postcolonial theorists are working from the US. European theorists such as Gloria Wekker (the Netherlands and Surinam), Vron Ware (Britain and the colonies/India), Philomena Essed (the Netherlands and the US) and Eske Wollrad (Germany) draw extensively on US race theories as well as postcolonial theories. Debates on eugenics, however, problematise the notion of European identity as identified with white even further,

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<sup>14</sup> I will move to the question of change later in this chapter.



because whiteness – in this case the ideology of fascism and Nazism – is no longer necessarily ‘visible’, nor can it be clearly defined. Rather it is a categorisation of inclusions and exclusions based on pseudo-science and the atrocious whims of national leaders.<sup>15</sup> I therefore find that these ideologies of discrimination and subjugation (extermination) are pivotal in understanding the meaning of white Europeanness. The ideas of contemporary genetics stand in some continuity with historical eugenics and are moreover connected to a gendered aspect and control over reproduction. This is a pertinent issue in Nordic postcolonial discourse and whiteness studies, to which will I return in case study 2. What I want to suggest is that it is perhaps in these theories that the analytic convergence of whiteness and gender is most fruitful and explicit.

In this section I will begin by recounting some of the intersections between whiteness and gender in scholarship that focuses on the colonial setting before I move to feminist theories on contemporary European whiteness or white Europeanness. This also becomes the place to introduce David Goldberg’s notion of ‘ethnorace’ in order to question the understanding of whiteness in a European perspective and context.

Postcolonial theory has shown that scientists in the field of eugenics in the nineteenth century tended to conflate physical appearance with personality traits and specific racial qualities (Gilman 1985, Gould 1993, Sturken and Cartwright 2001). In this nineteenth-century paradigm race was biologically determined and visually identifiable. What was visible on the body was thought to mirror the mind and character of people, and seemingly arbitrary characteristics were linked to black or white skin, flat or pointed noses, brown or blue eyes etc. This gave rise to a number of ‘scientific’ studies within the discipline of phrenology, where craniums were measured and assessed and the races were ranked (Gould 1993, Stepan and Gilman 1993). However, biological and cultural definitions of ‘race’ blend into each other and cannot be taken for distinct pronouncements of a certain attitude to ‘racial’ differences. As in the previous section I will focus my reading on the intersections of

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<sup>15</sup> The South African political system of segregation, ‘apartheid’, is a case in point. The racist system arbitrarily classified people into classes of more or less privileged positions in society (see also Goldberg, forthcoming). This is still an issue in South Africa; recently the Chinese minority won the right to be classified as ‘black’ in order to have access to empowerment schemes in the post-apartheid nation (Berlins 2008).



whiteness and feminism or women's studies. When it comes to eugenics and genetics, this means that reproduction and (reproductive) sexuality take centre stage. In 'Difference and Pathology. Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness', Sander Gilman (1985) outlines the connections and associations between Africans and (white female) sexuality in European art history and eugenic discourse. Gilman specifically deals with the case of Saartje Baartman, an African (khoi khoi) woman who, between 1810 and 1815 when she died, was exhibited in London and Paris as the 'Hottentot Venus'. During Baartman's life in Europe she was displayed as an example of the abnormal sexuality of Africans due mainly to her perceived large buttocks and labia. After her death she was autopsied as were many other African women, whose genitalia were shown as proof of the different human species (Gilman 1985; Buikema 2004; Schiebinger 2004: 168-72). A polygeistic argument of different racial geneses was thereby sustained through metonymic representation of the African female. Though scientists performed their examinations concerning sexuality on African women, research intended to cast light on the science of race was conducted on male Africans (Schiebinger 2004). This distinction in the scientific approach mirrors other research (at the time) and its dichotomous mental habits as well; the male was considered the true representative of the species, whereas the female was representative as the site of reproduction and sexuality.

By means of medical handbooks and studies, the link between the African person and the (white) prostitute was made also using physical characteristics. The prostitute was fat, had asymmetrical facial features, and the labia were seen to be 'throwbacks to the Hottentot, if not the chimpanzee', and so she was classified as a 'subclass of woman' (Gilman 1985: 98). As is often the case, sexuality was not only a site of passion, sex and reproduction but also a site of disease and degeneracy (Gilman 1985, Stoler 2002). Interracial reproduction was seen as a sign of degeneracy of the white race, and so it is the innate fear of otherness visualised in anatomy that lies behind the conflation of the (white) prostitute and the African woman, Gilman argues:

The other's pathology is revealed in her anatomy, and the blacks and the prostitute are both bearers of the stigmata of sexual difference and thus pathology. [...] Because the need for control was a projection of inner



fears, its articulation in visual images was in terms which were the polar opposite of the European male. (Gilman 1985: 107)

The eugenics and white 'scientific' work undertaken to disclose differences between races were invoked primarily to control reproduction. In the European colonies power was upheld through control of who got to reproduce and with whom (Stoler 2002). Fear of degeneracy through mixing of races is, then, linked to a notion of *purity* of the genes and the races, and in this sense the 'enemy' was uncontrollable reproductive sexuality, which in turn was placed with firstly the other, the female body, moreover, the black body, and finally the non-human, the animal. In connection with this, the white woman becomes a site of terror, because 'she stands as a white blackness, as a living contradiction of white supremacy' (Gordon 1998). The contradiction exists in the white woman's ability to bear black children, which makes the racial and genetic pool of white, male supremacy unstable and so she draws close similarities to black people and the connotations usually linked to the representations of black people.

On the other hand, if women were white enough they may be used as a reproductive tool to bring more white children into the world. The *Lebensborn* project in Germany as well as certain other perceived white populations, like Nazi-occupied Norway, is an example of the 'positive' usage of eugenics: when eugenics were used to reproduce ideal standards of whiteness rather than for extermination.<sup>16</sup> Nazi representatives were encouraged to take a Norwegian partner in order to reproduce. This has given rise to a heated debate in feminist history about the role of those perfectly 'white' Aryan women in Nazi eugenics experiments. Gisela Bock (2002) reads this phenomenon as a mark of oppression suffered by these living incubators of the alleged master-race. Claudia Koonz (1987) on the other hand assesses the same phenomenon in terms of the 'white' women's willing complicity with their masters. By extension this practice draws into question the role of white femininity in the oppression of the colonised and occupied peoples in the European imperial domains (Ware 1992). The Nazis' usage of controlled reproduction was however not a new invention. It had previously taken place in the colonies. Paul Gilroy (2004) argues that the colonies constituted a space of lurid preparation for what later became a full-blown attempt at exterminating

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<sup>16</sup> The Nazis' interest in reproduction of the 'same' and the contemporary uses of genetics will be discussed in case study 2.



Europe's Jewish population. The colonial sexual politics are such that the 'white' women come to share in the 'white' man's 'burden', while 'black' women's bodies are disposable and accessible to all. However, as noted above, the borders between these categorisations were porous – especially when it comes to the bodies of 'white' women and their capacity to bear 'black' children.

Reproduction of course is also at the centre of the debate when it comes to establishing collectiveness and belongingness as 'race' or nation in liberal democracies. In this discourse and applications ethnicity is linked to the female reproductive abilities and domestic roles in contemporary nation building (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1996: 113-14). It is from the bodies of the female population that the future of the nation literally as well as symbolically evolves. In wars and genocides it moreover becomes a site for violating the nation through the rape and procreation with the female population of the nation. In the European tradition the control of the nation has been held by the notion of the (white) Family of Man. This powerful structure has been evoked by several feminists (Firestone 1981, Haraway 1991, McClintock 1995), and pertains to the patriarchal construction of sexist oppression and the cultural and genetic cloning of the Same (Essed and Goldberg 2002). This posits women in the domesticated role of child bearers, carriers of national culture, and breeders of patriots etc. (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1996). The notion of ethnicity versus 'race' in relation to national identity is a subject to which I will return later on in this chapter.

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As the previous section has shown, a European approach to whiteness might prove somewhat differently grounded in the history of colonisation and eugenics than the US context. Moreover religious movements and national identity and feelings of belonging play their part in the conceptualisation of white Europeanness. Schueller (2005) remarks that in order for 'race' not to be merely an additive to (white) feminist thought, which when applied means that there is talk of 'blackness' as a sub-category to the normalised 'white' feminism, whiteness needs to be scrutinised and situated. It is the interconnections and intersections which are in focus, rather than positioning 'race' and gender as two distinct layers of oppression (Anthias and Yuval-Davis



1996). So, as a result, I want to suggest that the balancing act between and within the categories of 'race' and 'gender' lies at the foundation of critical whiteness studies in a European (as well as American) context.

Vron Ware (1992, Ware and Back 2002) has written extensively on the intersections of feminism and whiteness in the colonial as well as contemporary setting. Taking a sociological approach Ware (Ware and Back 2002) scrambles the colour line when discussing the meaning of racial visibility. With a European – though Anglo-Saxon – approach, Ware describes accounts of white journalists and researchers<sup>17</sup> who transformed themselves physically to look black or otherwise different in order to understand the mechanics and the experiences of racism first hand. The accounts share the insight that '[s]kin color was the visible sign of racial difference, but racial difference was more than skin color' (Ware and Back 2002: 82). The altered skin colour seemed to start a dynamic process of altered behaviour sparked by responses from the surrounding, white society. There is, as Ware points out, a necessary self-discovery: a point when the white researchers realise their own role of being white in their new experiences as being black, which enlightens their understanding of how racism works and is sustained by their own (former) ignorance of experiences of marginalisation and black lives.

Interesting in connection with sketching out the intersections of gender and whiteness, Ware's researchers and journalists show how women, in general and in the cases of racial differences, are used as representations of sexuality and to insult the other. Ware tells the story of the German foreman in Gunter Walraff's account of living for two years as a Turkish immigrant in Germany (Ware and Back 2002: 70-1, 88-90). The foreman insults the Turkish workers, including the disguised Walraff, by describing the Turkish women as highly sexed and sexually available, but when Walraff's alias 'Ali' talks back to him, the foreman aggressively verbally abuses his representation of the Turkish women. The women become the tool by which the other (man) is de-masculinised and personally insulted, whereas the actual female Turks are nowhere present. In sexual narratives of or with the other, the humanising decency

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<sup>17</sup> Ware examines the books; *Black Like Me* by John Howard Griffin from 1961, *Soul Sister* by Grace Halsell from 1969, *Lowest of the Low* by Gunter Walraff from 1988, and *My Enemy, My Self* by Yoram Binur from 1989.



and the unsaid rules of 'proper' conduct are non-existent – or even perhaps thought unnecessary, Ware says. In addition, the female bodies are not real but representational of white male desire (positive), or other feminisation (negative). The Walraff tale suggests that not much has happened in the female representation as the other since colonial times. Women are enlisted into serving a nationalistic ideology and are still attacked for being the bearers of ethnicised othered culture (Griffin and Braidotti 2002).

Ware's accounts also draw attention to a particular European aspect of whiteness. The German journalist, Walraff, is othered through postulating Turkish origin – i.e., it is not necessarily a question of visual difference, but rather a question of perceived religious and cultural differences between 'Turkish' and 'German' identity. In the European context the process of othering is based not on a colour-line alone, but on historically contingent power structures, on religious and 'irreligious' conceptions of the European self and on a racist use and definitions of ethnicity or culture (culturalism). Rosi Braidotti and Gabriele Griffin pay attention to the 'conflation between ethnicity, culture and national identity' that serves a 'homogenization as a racialized strategy' (Griffin and Braidotti 2002: 229-30). Walraff's impersonation of a citizen with a Turkish national and cultural background is classified by the foreman as an other, homogenised in stereotypes concerning non-Germans and played out on the representation of female Turkish bodies as the boundaries of the nation (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1996). The 'bearers of nationalistic ideology' (Griffin and Braidotti 2002: 229) and the focus for many cultural conflicts are women's bodies (Ware 2006). Consequently politics is involved. Additionally, consumerist practices play a role in sustaining women as cultural bearers, to which the recent publications and popularity of biographical books depicting Muslim women's lives (from oppressed Muslim to liberated westerner and secularist) testify (Ware 2006, Mahmood forthcoming).<sup>18</sup> Another way of distinguishing the other in Europe is through language (Linke 2003). When national identity is built on a linguistic community, particular accents and dialects are used as a device to exclude certain people. In addition the (ancient) history of the mother tongue becomes a genealogy parallel to a

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<sup>18</sup> I will comment on some of the written work by Ayaan Hirsi Ali as an exponent of this sort of liberated-women's literature shortly. Both Vron Ware (2006) and Saba Mahmood (forthcoming) take up the stand of the liberal women's movement on the question of the agency of Muslim women in their latest work.



racial (biological) genealogy configured through the idiom of language (Linke 2003: 155). Nationalism is both cultural and genetic, almost to the point of the two conflating. Nevertheless, creolisation of the ‘mother tongue’ may serve as a subjectivity process and resistance (Glissant 1997).

What is at play in racialisation and exclusion in the European context is, thus, manifold. Not only are visible others interpellated into the racist structure, the conflation of ethnicity, culture and national identity – encompassing sufficient mastering of national languages – additionally makes it possible to construe of the national collective and its others in broader terms. Almost anyone can be othered in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, so to speak, though not everyone can be ‘white’ or become a dominant subject. The power positions are just not symmetrical. That is, the dominant subject-position or ethnic group holding political and economical power is identified with ‘whiteness’, and as I will argue later, Christianity.<sup>19</sup> Braidotti and Griffin call for revisiting the politics of difference instead of the identity politics, which often, they argue, drives the research and the political efforts in Europe. Identity politics keep ethnic and cultural identities fixed and put forth a claim that ‘the needs of a particular minority group have to be recognized and dealt with’ (Griffin and Braidotti 2002: 230). Rather Braidotti and Griffin seek to understand ‘intra-group differences [and] ... that identifying with one colour does not automatically and on its own determine your socio-cultural position’ (Griffin and Braidotti 2002: 231). This point brings into question on which grounds distinctions of ‘us’ and ‘othered’ are made.

Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis (1996) make a distinction between racist and ethnic categorisation. Racism or racist categorisation relate to a wish to subordinate a certain group of people, whereas ethnic categorisation relates to fixation of a community (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1996: 112). However, in societies such as the European, where a discourse about progress through education and science is favoured, I would argue that the line between subordination of a community and fixation of a community is profoundly blurred. That is, a community that is perceived as stagnated or caught up in past ideologies is also readily subordinated to the western

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<sup>19</sup> See also case studies in this dissertation and in particular case study 3.



world's perception of its own teleological progress and superiority. This is one of the legacies of the European Enlightenment. David T. Goldberg (1993) recognised this conundrum and coined the term 'ethnorace' to describe the blending into each other of the categories. Goldberg aims at redefining 'race' in terms of ethnic usages, i.e., he wants to question the merely biological and subjugating use of the term by suggesting that the term has more in common with the definition of 'ethnicity' than usually predicted. The concept of 'ethnicity' often is preferred to the concept of 'race' though in many relations the two are used interchangeably, Goldberg asserts. 'Ethnicity' is perceived as a benign conceptualisation of cultural and social otherness, but as instances of ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Sudan have shown it is not as innocent as it may appear (Goldberg 1993: 75). The idea of ethnicity 'turns primarily on the boundary construction and on the internalization and naturalization of identity by social subjects' by invoking invented and perceived pre-determined differences of mental, social and cultural capacities, aesthetics, kinship and linguistic connections etc. (Goldberg 1993: 75-6). In contrast, the idea of race is additionally based on biological notions of descent. However, Goldberg insists, these biologically-determined differences are culturally and socially chosen and adhered to through rhetorical internalisation and naturalisation.

Though Goldberg is arguing for an ethnicisation of the term race, I want to reverse the concepts in a European context and argue for a racialisation of ethnicity. I agree with Goldberg that the two terms are not synonymous. However, in the European context it has not always proved necessary to evoke the category of race to discriminate, subjugate and exclude others on genetic and cultural-nationalistic grounds. In order to avoid re-establishing the term 'ethnic' as a culturally benign conceptualisation of otherness, I think it important to recognise the racist structures of ethnic differentiation in the European discourse. I will consequently refer to the term 'ethnorace' or 'ethnoracial' when developing the idea of white Europeanness in order to emphasise the contingencies as well as the schisms with the racial theories and historically founded politics and social realities of the US.

#### *1.3.5 The issue of secularity/religion*

Next to the already reiterated genetic and cultural-national discriminations, in the European context religion emerges as a site of ethnoracial dispute. Though the end of



the Second World War brought an end to the popularity of eugenics, if not on the practice<sup>20</sup>, the divisions between them-and-us persist in altered and in less outspoken forms. Ideas of ethnic differentiation are still prevalent and recently the importance of religion has re-entered the stage. This is the issue I shall turn to next.

As argued in the beginning of this chapter, in the first wave of western feminism, in the late nineteenth century, the issue of religion – predominantly in the form of Christianity – was debated frequently. Feminists have not always had a comfortable relation to Christianity, mainly due to the patriarchal structure of the church as well as the gendered God (Armstrong 1999). In the late nineteenth century, white, American feminist<sup>21</sup> Mathilda Joslyn Gage (1881) thus argued that the Christian Church has circumvented and destroyed the original matriarchy of the ancient world (Waters 2000). Distinguishing between ‘true religion’ and ‘theology’, Gage reiterates the many instances in world history in which women’s religious functions and high esteem have been replaced by Christian dogmas of women’s original sin and slight worth. This contempt for women, Gage argues, is mirrored in the position allocated to women in society at large. But Christianity has also been invoked to support women’s rights, such as in the writings of the white, British philosopher and political theorist Mary Wollstonecraft. Wollstonecraft (1792) contends, in the liberal tradition, that though ‘men seem to be designed to attain a greater degree of virtue [than women]’ (Waters 2000: 99), men and women share the same kind of virtue stemming from God and from exercising their own reason. Wollstonecraft is arguing that women belong to the sphere of human beings rather than to that of animals or the immature and thus women should receive education of the same standard and on the same issues as men. God has an even greater role in the work of Maria W. Stewart (1830-3), who – like Wollstonecraft, their differences notwithstanding – makes a connection between Christianity and the education of women. Stewart was an African American and her work deals with women’s rights as well as the rights of African Americans, and she calls on African Americans and women in general to make use of the liberal ideas of equality and liberty for all through furthering their knowledge by educating themselves. As a professed Christian, Stewart connects slavery to ignorance and

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<sup>20</sup> The practice of sterilising ‘unfit’ people persisted into the 1970s in Sweden and is still practised among Roma women in Slovakia today. More on this issue in the first case study.

<sup>21</sup> I am underscoring the gendered and racial categorisation, ethnic and national belonging in my presentation of these theorists so as to keep the multilayered intersectionalities in mind.



Christianity to knowledge. Ignorance can be defeated primarily through ‘cultivat[ing] among ourselves [African American, women] the pure principle of piety, morality and virtue’ (Waters 2000: 215). Thus, for Stewart, freedom of the individual goes through a submission to a certain theology.<sup>22</sup>

The three first-wave feminists presented here all left traces in the contemporary feminist debates, and they point towards the difficult tradition and intertwining of liberal feminism, religion and inequalities and oppressions such as slavery. Thus, Raka Shome (1999) argues that major indicators of whiteness in the Indian colonial setting were Christianity and language as well as skin colour, which was connected also to ancient Indian myths and traditions. Of late the feminist discussion about religious heritage and belonging has taken up the issue of (post)secularism (Mahmood 2005, Braidotti 2006, Bracke 2008). This is also an issue taken up in this dissertation, in case study 3.

In relation to contemporary feminism and women’s studies, issues of liberation, emancipation, democracy and female agency are still in question. But current debates focus on Islam rather than Christianity<sup>23</sup> in relation to women’s situations, and so in this section I will present three prominent and different writers on Islam and feminism. Their diversities stem not only from their scholarly theoretical approaches but also from the differences in their geographical and cultural backgrounds, to which they all in one way or another allude in their work. They are; Meyda Yegenoglu (1998), Saba Mahmood (2005) and, lastly, an important political figure in the European debate, though not an academic in the strict sense, Ayaan Hirsi Ali. After several years in the Dutch parliament for the liberal VVD party, Hirsi Ali recently moved to Washington to continue her political work in a Republican think-tank, American Enterprise Institute.

Hirsi Ali has in a few years become a controversial figure in continental migrant politics. Using her personal experiences as a Somali woman brought up in Arabian

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<sup>22</sup> This route to freedom is interesting in relation to what I will present later as Saba Mahmood’s ‘theory’ of agency.

<sup>23</sup> I would suggest that this is partly due to the binary public discourse of ‘clashes of civilisations’ (Huntington) and ‘either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists’ (Bush), which positions Christianity in a favourable light conflated with a secularist, enlightened world-view. I will discuss these connotations in relation to journalism in the following case studies.



Moslem communities, who migrated to Europe, received an academic education and excelled in Dutch politics, Hirsi Ali today denounces Islam as a religion demeaning to women primarily due to sexual morality, which is implemented on women's bodies and which saturates Islamic societies, Hirsi Ali asserts (Ali 2006). Hirsi Ali calls time and again for an Islamic Enlightenment, which she believes would secularise Moslems and end the tyranny of Islamic patriarchy. Along with eleven other intellectuals and writers<sup>24</sup>, Hirsi Ali signed a manifesto responding to the controversy which arose out of the publication of twelve cartoons in a Danish newspaper in 2005 depicting the Moslem prophet, Mohammed.<sup>25</sup> The response was entitled 'Manifesto: together facing the new totalitarianism' and can be found on various websites.<sup>26</sup> The writers found that the controversy had revealed a necessity of struggling against Islamism and for 'the universal values' of 'freedom, equal opportunity and secular values for all'. The manifesto continues:

Like all totalitarianisms, Islamism is nurtured by fears and frustrations. The hate preachers bet on these feelings in order to form battalions destined to impose a liberticidal and unegalitarian world. But we clearly and firmly state: nothing, not even despair, justifies the choice of obscurantism, totalitarianism and hatred. Islamism is a reactionary ideology which kills equality, freedom and secularism wherever it is present. Its success can only lead to a world of domination: *man's domination of woman, the Islamists' domination of all the others*. To counter this, we must assure universal rights to oppressed or discriminated people. (emphasis added)

Clearly the manifesto draws on a strong enlightenment rhetoric invoking the concepts of freedom, equality and secularism. It also draws on the liberal feminist tradition paralleling men's subjugation of women to a theological subjugation of both men and women. This correlation between men-Islam and women-the west is at first sight perhaps oddly chosen. Firstly, because of the traditional conception and

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<sup>24</sup> Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Chahla Chafiq, Caroline Fourest, Bernard-Henri Lévy, Irshad Manji, Mehdi Mozaffari, Maryam Namazie, Taslima Nasreen, Salman Rushdie, Antoine Sfeir, Philippe Val, Ibn Warraq.

<sup>25</sup> I will be dealing in depth with the controversy in case study 3

<sup>26</sup> Quoted here from <http://www.petitionspot.com/petitions/manifesto>.



orientalisation of Islam, which renders Moslems feminised, as the other (Gilman 1985, Yegenoglu 1998, Stoler 2002). In the manifesto's constellation it is the west which is put in the position as the feminine, in danger of oppression. Secondly, because surely there are other political analogies to be drawn than women's oppression by men, and women's rights are often seen as a 'women's issue' rather than a societal issue. When it comes to histories and traditions of oppressions and dominations it may actually be difficult to find examples that do not posit the west as the dominating factor – though this would obviously go against the argument in the manifesto. But there are – at least – two reasons for this juxtaposition: Firstly, the feminisation of the 'west' is underscored by the 'fear' of Islamic dominance and hegemony, which the authors to the manifesto identify. Fear of overpowering patriarchal dominance (Islam) places the 'despairing' west in the position of the under-dog that has to fight for its freedom from domination. Secondly, it aligns the 'west' with values of gender equality and freedom. Moreover, placing women's liberation at the forefront of this alleged 'clash of civilisations' is symptomatic for the way in which women's bodies are the site on which these cultural battles are fought (Yegenoglu 1998, Griffin and Braidotti 2002, Ware 2006).

Also worth noticing is the use of 'man' and 'woman' as generic forms opposed to 'men' and 'women'. The categories are universal and do not distinguish between different cultural, religious and political stances within the groups of men and women. This is what Saba Mahmood (forthcoming) finds to be sustaining the neo-conservative politics supporting the war on terror extended by the US and its allies in Europe. Mahmood analyses a number of popular biographies by female Moslem writers – among them Hirsi Ali and Irshad Manji – who base their knowledge of the oppression of Moslem women on their own experiences. These experiences feed into the binary position of 'the Western secular values' against 'the obscurantism and oppression of Islam', which the aforementioned manifesto also invokes, and are littered with provocative expressions about Moslems and Islam, Mahmood contends. Mahmood calls for a feminist reassessment of some of the traditional values of feminist thought if indeed feminists want to distance themselves from what Mahmood sees as the 'imperial politics of our times' (Mahmood forthcoming: 118). Mahmood (2005, and forthcoming) radicalises the debate about female and feminist agency by arguing that piety and submission to Islam for some women poses a possibility of agency. Thus



Mahmood calls for a cautious approach from feminists when dealing with religion versus democracy and secularity. The latter may not necessarily equate equality of women's rights in all cultures, Mahmood argues.

Basing her theory of female agency on Judith Butler's notion of 'performativity' Mahmood wants to go beyond the binary of resistance-hegemony so prevalent in feminist theory. Thereby she insists on keeping 'the meaning of the concept of agency open' so as to make room for theorising about 'ethical agency'. Presenting her fieldwork conducted among Egyptian women of the Moslem Piety Movement, Mahmood provokes the feminist standpoint and line of theorising that focuses on resistance to the patriarchal order. The women Mahmood investigates understand their agency to mean that they have freedom to subjugate themselves in order to realise their Moslem faith more fully. Mahmood uses the example of a virtuoso pianist who may submit herself to many painful hours of practising playing the piano, 'as well as to the hierarchy of apprenticeship' in order to fulfil her calling (Mahmood 2005: 29). But this freedom to choose submission is not an ethical decision alone, Mahmood argues: the effects in the society surrounding the Piety Movement, which Mahmood's research evolved around, is profound – not in a direct political sense (the movement is not interested in an Islamic state nor work for political parties and politicians, for instance) but in an ethico-political sense (Mahmood 2005: 35). Mahmood insists on the differences between the western tradition and definition of 'piety' to mean a more introverted and individually based spirituality, whereas the Islamic version is connected to ethical and practical actions and so directly affects the surrounding society (Mahmood 2005: 4 (footnote)). But the tradition of constructing agency through a religious practice is – as Stewart showed us above – not unknown to the western tradition either.

Following Edward Said and the critique of Orientalism, Meyda Yegenoglu (1998) problematises the issue of the veil and its many meanings in a new Europe. Like Mahmood, Yegenoglu recognises the situation of 'western' feminists as double and problematic. Western, white feminists are both a part of the orientalising west and part of a subjugated position in relation to 'western' men. Yegenoglu, following Jacques Derrida and Luce Irigaray among others, proposes a poststructuralist approach to the problem and calls for a 'deconstruction' followed by a 'displacement' of the subject.



The notion of displacement is important, because '[i]t implies a subjectivity where embodiment and relationality are not denied but become the constitutive moment of subjectivity, challenging and subverting the western form of sovereign subject' (Yegenoglu 1998: 9). Yegenoglu continues to construe two different kinds of subjectivity. The first is of the western, dominating and possessive kind; and the second 'is active in the sense of receptivity and openness to others and otherness' (Yegenoglu 1998: 9). It is the latter Yegenoglu calls for in a deconstruction and displacement of the western idea of autonomy and sovereignty. However, Yegenoglu's account seems to place oppression entirely outside the 'Oriental' subject. Shome (1999) in contrast recognises the complex structures of interpellation when she argues that through Indian myths, customs, as well as British colonial educational systems made a discourse of the superiority of 'whiteness' possible in colonised India. Thus, the roots of oppressive hegemony have many threads and strands of origin – some reaching through the 'coloniser', some through the 'colonised' and some coming from a dynamic relationship between the two.

Though feminism has a long history of theorising and practising its relation to religion, it would seem that the interconnections between Islam and politics in the contemporary western world have implications for the way we think about feminism and religion – that is, when the religion is Islam in contrast to Christianity. Cultural and social power structures play into the analyses of Islam and feminism and so it is not 'merely' an analysis of women's relations to a patriarchal theology in an otherwise western-defined realm, but the colonial, imperial and enslavement histories play a part in the analyses as well. These differences and similarities have not been theorised sufficiently yet – and it is not my task to do so in this dissertation. Rather this section points to the contemporary categorisations of Moslem women and the feminist efforts made to dissolve the complications encountered in white feminists' work on the othered Moslem woman. These efforts point to another way of looking at agency or subjectivity in relation not only to the dichotomised concepts of power and resistance and not only seen as an individual quality.

Though I am sympathetic to Yegenoglu's support for a more receptive and open subjectivity, I fear the tendency of yet again universalising common humanity – in the sense of encompassing all differences in one universal lump of humanity. It seems



futile to wish for unison of subjectivities. Rather I will argue for realising the variations and ever-shifting diversities within humanity – and beyond – and without slipping into the relativism of identity politics. In order to recognise the other in the self while not conflating the two or letting one take over the other, ideas of connectivity and relationality need to be thought of in web-like constellations of political agency and power relations, and thus issues of responsibility and accountability are crucial (Braidotti 2006: 12). This is where the phenomenological legacy is the strongest.

## 1.4 CONCLUDING CHAPTER ONE

### *1.4.1 Ethics of difference; de Beauvoir, Braidotti and Glissant*

In the above reiteration of arguments for intersectionality, black womanism, secularity and piety as agency, I have criss-crossed between epistemological claims to be heard and acknowledged to political calls for democratic intervention. However, I want to take some space to unfold the ethics in the phenomenology and post-phenomenology of difference. Returning to de Beauvoir I want to draw lines between her ethics of ambiguity (1976) and the politics of location developed in a nomadic vein by Rosi Braidotti (2006). De Beauvoir's ethics of ambiguity presupposes that an ethical stance involves a political commitment, and political commitment to de Beauvoir belongs to the Left and radical political causes (Arp 2001: 113). De Beauvoir's ethics is based on collectivity and on willing the other free. It is the other who holds the key to the future and it is therefore in the interest of the self to think in collectivities and common futures. Dividing 'man' into five stages of progression towards an ethical engagement with the other, de Beauvoir argues that 'to be free is not to have the power to do anything you like; it is to be able to surpass the given toward an open future; the existence of others as a freedom defines my situation and is even the condition of my own freedom' (de Beauvoir 1976: 91).

It seems plausible that when de Beauvoir says that '[t]he failure is not surpassed, but assumed' it is comparable to Rosi Braidotti's nomadic ethics of accountability, in which Braidotti insists on reversing the Kantian avoidance of pain and rather urges an ethical transformation through the pain of loss and disenchantment (Braidotti 2006: 87). Braidotti speaks of the ethical transformation of Europe from the universalistic centre to a project of becoming-minoritarian, which she sees as a painful



transformation but potentially creative. This transformation may be linked to previously mentioned ‘discomfort’ in putting things out of line, in the terminology of Ahmed. However, I want to begin with Braidotti’s notion of the *nomadic subject* on which the ethical strand of her thinking is developed. The nomadic subject is a boundary figure which takes sexual difference as a starting point (Braidotti 1994). The non-fixity of identity and subjectivity is furthermore elaborated in Braidotti’s work, where the nomadic subject not only merges binaries, but also constantly moves in a flux-resisting fixity: ‘S/he [the nomadic subject] is a cyborg, but equipped also with an unconscious. S/he is Irigaray’s “mucous”, or “divine”, but endowed with a multicultural perspective.’ (Braidotti 1994: 36). The multiple connections making up the nomadic subject leaves her without a fixed identity, but instead with a continuing cartography, which in turn is realised retrospectively so as to deny a present known identity. The subject is a constant process, which is something Homi Bhabha also notes when he proposes a shift from ‘identification’ to understanding the processes of subjectification (Bhabha 1994: 37).

The concept of nomadic subjects generates a nomadic subjectivity, which gives Braidotti a way of theorising the condition of advanced capitalism as a site of transversal connections. Operating within advanced capitalism we need an ethics of interrelations, which also requires transversal discursive practices (Braidotti 2006: 138). These practices are seen by Braidotti to run in several modes supported by a politics of location:

On the side of power as *potestas* or negative force, the subject has to get synchronized with the public representations that are made of its multiple axes of location: gender or sexuality, ethnicity, physicality. The construction of these representations is always outward-looking or external and hence collective, interactive and driven by memory or genealogy. A crucial navigational tool to sustain this process of synchronization is consciousness-raising, [...]. Consciousness is the search engine that makes certain categories emerge some of the time and hence selects them at what appears as a random pattern, which is a web of intersecting lines, made by different speeds and rhythms of intensity (Braidotti 2006: 139-40).



Thus, Braidotti is dealing with ever-shifting ‘subject-positions in terms of accountability, ethical values and collective bonds’ (Braidotti 2006: 140) rather than creation of new identities or identifications. Braidotti’s conception of the subject is Deleuzian and characterised as a site or field of assemblages of external relations or forces (Braidotti 2006: 160). Consciousness, then, is to Braidotti not an essential and inward-looking ‘I’, but rather an ever-changing assemblage of interconnections and relations. Rather than *identity*, Braidotti theorises *intensity*.

Ethically, this means for whiteness and white Europeanness firstly that European identity needs to be reworked so as to realise its constructedness and racialised whiteness. Methodologically, nomadic intensity works to undo the hegemonic tendencies of Europeanness while keeping in mind the history of the continent so as to take responsibilities and remain accountable (Braidotti 2006: 75). Braidotti’s theories of the nomadic subject thus add the concept of memory and history, which is crucial when theorising about white Europeanness and relations to others and to which I will return in the next chapter.

The self-other relation seems to be made up of two points of potentially productive ethical shifts around the other in epistemological, political and ethical terms. The first point is ‘relation’. Most of the thinkers dealing with otherness as an ethical necessity are thinking in terms of ‘not-one’.<sup>27</sup> To de Beauvoir the other is the condition for the ethical turn of the self and Braidotti continuously refer to a collective consciousness-raising as an ethico-political movement towards change. The point is not that one needs to understand the other fully but rather that there is room for opacity of relations (Glissant 1997: 193). Transparency, postcolonial poet Glissant argues, calls for reduction of the other to something graspable and close to the self. Glissant’s ethical project is also one of standpoint and situational recognition, but the need to know the other completely is missing. It is a project of the senses and may urge the subject to

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<sup>27</sup> Luce Irigaray developed most famously the notion of the sex which is not one in *This Sex which is Not One* (1985). But as mentioned above the idea of interdependency and interconnectedness was already present in the thoughts of de Beauvoir. I want to use the concept here in a broader sense of otherness.



embrace the *donner avec*<sup>28</sup> or the opaqueness of cultural manifestations and mutations in order not to fix them. With Glissant's poetics we moreover reach the second point, which is creative affirmation. A definition of the other is always escaping the self and it is futile to attempt to name the other or to ask for recognition by the other or categorise him or her in identity formations. The point is to go with the opaque proximity, the intensity of the relation as a site of transformation of both self and other. Rather the ethical turn of acknowledgement of collectivity forges non-reductionist understanding of the other always already part of – and a condition for – the self. This results methodologically in the rejection of self-other binary thought and the adoption of more complex forms of accounting for self-other relations.

This point introduces the positive openness towards the other and the production as creativity (Critchley 2007) and affirmative change. 'Creative affirmation' is also a space of the sensuous or sensory and a generative force of creating affirmative politics from painful histories and power relations. These relations and creative affirmations of course need to be seen in the context of cultural and societal realities. They connect people through different means of communication and in the following chapters I will be using journalism as a case in point to flesh out the relation on a larger globalised scale.

In the following chapter I will examine the extent to which journalism serves as a practice of relation and creative affirmation in relation to the other. I analyse journalism as a practice of relation between people and other entities and discuss how this practice may look in a globalised ethical multiple relation. The journalistic practice of the concepts of 'objectivity' and 'freedom of speech' is, as previously stated in this chapter, founded on a reduction of the other to the same as the self. In order to see journalism as a potential practice of relation and creative affirmation I firstly argue for a deconstruction of the aforementioned concepts and secondly connect this journalism of relation to a larger supra-national and cultural realm. Critiquing the moralistic and universalist assumptions of whiteness in ideas of cosmopolitanism I am moreover discussing the re-configuration of the concept of

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<sup>28</sup> The idea of Edouard Glissant (1997) and his concept of *donner-avec* is translated as 'giving-on-and-with'. The term 'understanding' may be useful here though without the connotations of transparency in relation to the object of knowledge.



cosmopolitanism which departs from the claims of morality and instead bases its global span on ethical and multiple self-other relation.

#### *1.4.2 Final words*

In this chapter I have presented a challenge to the claim of universality and objectivity of white ‘western’ culture and politics. I have introduced debates and methods emanating from African-American scholars and white feminist scholars as well as positioned their politics and epistemological demands for recognition with the phenomenological traditions as a backdrop. This philosophical tradition is particularly apt when theorising difference because of its emphasis on embodiment, the body as a site for experience and identification situated in the world, experience as source of knowledge, and self-other perceptions and the experience of the shifting and impacting position of the other, it is readily adapted and adopted by politicians and cultural debaters and analysts alike. These ideas are transposed from debate to debate and emerge as sites of dispute in different ways.

The critique of egocentrism and of universalisation of the white man’s experience of the world has been proven wrong insofar as phenomenology is as flexible as the experience and perception of the thinkers who appropriate its methodologies allow. Though perception is at the core of a phenomenological approach to difference, perception should not be understood as interchangeable with visualisation. It is rather an understanding that creates strong ties to consciousness and experience. Drawing in the whole personal experience and consciousness of difference phenomenology presents a theory of the self-other relation which is simultaneously personal and political. I would argue that this critical development within phenomenological thinking would not have occurred without the minds and bodies of ‘race’ and gender scholars as well as scholars of postcolonial theory. These scholars and philosophers are pivotal to developing a phenomenological ethics. Conversely, to a large extent ‘race’, gender and postcolonial scholars owe the arguments of embodied knowledge, body-based subjectivities and the politics of perception of the other to phenomenology. The legacy of phenomenology in ‘race’, gender and postcolonial research can therefore be seen in the identity politics of rights for minority groups as well as in ethics of the relation with the other.



Mrs Obama is right when she says that it is about how we perceive each other. But it is more than that, it is about how we perceive and experience ourselves in relation to and conditioned by each other. It is, as I have shown in this chapter, an epistemological contention as part of the critique levelled at claims of objectivity and universality of the knowledge and experience of white, European masculinity. I have discussed whiteness as a hegemonic worldview and site of political, social and cultural privilege in the 'western' world. Whiteness in a European context is not, I have argued, merely about visibility – i.e. perception – but it is a historically contingent idea of superiority and entitlement bound to the political, religious and cultural standard of white European men, as well as women in their own ambiguous way. This idea needs to be deconstructed and dismantled and this process, as Braidotti et al. remind us, is not painless. But it is, I assert, an ethical must. I have therefore made the case for the self-other relation as an ethical contention of collective relation and creative affirmation. And finally the self-other relation as I have theorised and discussed it in this chapter is also a political contention which the feminist movement and the Obama presidential campaign have made apparent.

These three levels of relation; the epistemological, the ethical and the political, will be carried through into the next chapter in which I will situate the self-other relation in the mediated and globalised world using journalistic theory and practice as negotiator and connector.



## CHAPTER 2:

### 2.1 SITUATING THE FRAMEWORK PROPOSED IN THE CHAPTER

This chapter is about journalism and about how journalism may function as a site of creative affirmation between people. This implies a vision of journalism as a mode of connectivity and networking, which in turn, as will be discussed in chapter 3, produce cosmopolitan solidarity and transformative relations. In the preceding chapter, I discussed how the phenomenological conception of perception elaborated and developed by scholars of ‘race’ and gender help conceive of a self-other relation in (post)colonial societies – that is, societies that are either former colonies or colonisers – which takes into account a possible shift from an identity-based politics of relations to an excess of relation. I argued for the Deleuzian idea that singular entities are constituted through their always (ex)changing affects and that thinking of subjectivity in terms of not-one and hence of a structural but dynamic self-other interaction, is an ethical must (de Beauvoir 1976, Glissant 1997, Braidotti 2006). The following two chapters present journalism as a privileged site of connectivity and relation as defined in the beginning of chapter 1. It therefore follows that a definition of the very term journalism is in order. It is a surprisingly rare endeavour in studies dealing with ‘the media’ or ‘journalism’ to actually define journalistic practice or journalism. I believe that this lack of attention to issues of definition leaves journalism open to sometimes unwarranted criticism. It also allows theorists to overlook potential points of criticism within the practice itself, as well as in terms of the impact it is likely to have on and the effects it mobilises in the societies in which journalism functions. In this chapter and in this dissertation, journalism takes on several shapes and functions, which I will explore and outline progressively. As a general rule, however, let me state that journalism is always relational. It is how we understand and make use of these relations that is at the core of an ethics of journalistic subjectivity as defined in this dissertation.

Methodologically, in this chapter I will flesh out the interdependencies and dynamics between journalistic practices of objectivity and freedom of expression, journalist-subjects and their relation to the power of perception which their practice affords, and what I call journalistic cultural memory, which makes out the interstices of the fabric of social imaginaries.



This chapter then sets out to develop a theoretical framework for the dissertation's case studies based on the conclusions of the previous chapter and the arguments to come in chapter 3. I argue for returning the ethics of journalism to the singular journalistic subject and thereby to develop a journalistic subjectivity emphasising the constitution of the self as not-one and hence as being linked to others or constituted in networks of relations. In a later chapter, I discuss how this ethical self-other relation transposes into a mediated global context. Taking my cue from phenomenology as I discussed it through the thoughts and theories of 'race', gender and postcolonial scholars in the previous chapter, in chapter 3 I stretch the self-other relation as practised and mediated by journalism in the contemporary cultural and political space of Denmark to identify and encompass an ethical and political discussion about potential journalistic relations on a global scale. Epistemologically this calls for – as already discussed in chapter 1 – a re-definition of both the ways of situating the self and of the means of associating with the others.

I want to argue for the need to develop multiple alternative forms of knowledge production, which do justice to the relational nature of the self. This epistemological claim unfolds into a broader point about the importance of making apparent and available the productive role that others have played in the construction of European identity patterns and cultural values. This will allow us to acknowledge as legitimate multiple, alternative knowledge claims about the history, culture and politics which we Europeans call 'our own'. This moreover potentially introduces new and more inclusive cultural memories and an ethics that respects differences and ambiguities. Politically I will also discuss the global context of journalistic connections and relations of differences in the following chapter. In the present chapter I continue to set up the framework of references dealing with the epistemological, ethical and political issues introduced above. In chapter 1 I argued that a critique which emerged from 'race' and postcolonial scholars and white feminists alike challenge the claimed universality and objectivity of white 'western' culture and politics. This was done using discussions based in phenomenology's embodied knowledge claim and theories of body-based subjectivities. I now want to relate these debates to the societal and productive context of contemporary European and 'western' globalised and mediated culture and politics using the concepts of cultural memory and the social imaginary. In this chapter therefore I focus on journalism as theory and practice producing



cultural memory and social imaginaries of gendered, ethnic, religious, national and racial differences. I am therefore emphasising a view on journalism which sees journalism as a process of memory making (Kitch 2008). With this practised and productive journalism I continue by reworking ideas of cosmopolitanism from universal reproductions of sameness into creative productions of singular self-other relations.

## 2.2 COMPOSING THE SOCIAL IMAGINARY<sup>29</sup>

Journalism today is a very powerful tool in representing the culture and ideology in which we live (Gill 2007). At times it is even the most significant source of information on issues about which the public may not have first-hand knowledge (Andreassen 2007). The sender-receiver relation between journalistic discourse and practice and personal and social discourses makes journalism a component of the symbolic 'glue' (Braidotti 2002) or the social imaginary, which flows between the social and the subject. The social imaginary functions like 'ideology' (Nealon and Giroux 2003) or 'shifting imaginaries' (Pieterse and Parekh 1995) on two levels. On one level it is the social imaginary that constructs (distorted) ideas of common sense; an obscure taken-for-grantedness, which limits development and critique by mystifying issues. In Marxist-inspired theories of the media, the power of the ideological structure is organised by the dominant class through the 'material structure of ideology' (Gramsci 1971). In other words, this is the public sphere; social structures of representation such as libraries, architecture, the press and publishing houses, street names etc. It can only be overcome by way of a convincing counter-ideology, which tells the 'truth'. However, I would argue that this is not a realistic suggestion as it would simply exchange one ideology for another. Rather I call on a continuous questioning of ideologies, because they are indeed hard to avoid, through

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<sup>29</sup> I use the concept of the social imaginary to accommodate certain flexibilities between the disciplinary fields within which I am working. Though I realise that the Lacanian notion of the 'symbolic order' may have proved helpful too it would have called for a psychoanalytic reading and drawn on accompanying theories, which do not readily apply themselves to media studies. It would call for a different analysis than what I am attempting here. Similarly, the concept of 'discourse' could be said to have provided me with an operational concept. However, I intend to trace my analysis back to the issues of subjectivity and intersubjectivity and in that relation I find that the concept of 'the social imaginary' helps me theorise about the subject (also outside language), the intersubjective relations (but not psychologically defined) and the social scheme (and political power relations) in which it is all expressed. The concept of 'the social imaginary' allows me to draw on theories developed within media studies, women's studies, sociology and philosophy at the same time. The concept of 'cultural memory', which I discussed above, furthermore gives access to theorisation in terms of historical elements constituting the social imaginary.



awareness or consciousness. This move is possible, I argue, if one sees the libraries, architecture, the press and publishing houses, street names etc. as materialised cultural memories and consequently one understands cultural memory as a major influence and a structural though flexible component of the social imaginary. Moreover, cultural memory is sustained through journalistic reiterations and repetitions. I will therefore discuss below the historically contingent function of the social imaginary in relation to journalistic practice.

On the second level the social imaginary is necessary in that it frames social modes of interaction and production. By extension this means that the social imaginary is the basis on which change occurs through shifting and changing social representations and cultural memories. It helps us to perceive and to develop modes of relation to a common reality to which we refer in everyday life. However, it can also prove to be restricting to our wellbeing if it builds on dogma and if it is not allowed to transform itself, the community and the connections. The fact that the two levels are operating simultaneously makes the social imaginary into a very complex, but also a slippery, concept. All cultural acts are ‘critical, complicit, [and] a little of both’ (Nealon and Giroux 2003: 91). There is no clear distinction between the two levels. Social imaginaries cannot simply be replaced, but must be challenged and constantly reworked. In such a challenge journalism is an important player. Journalism plays an important part in upholding and potentially transforming the social imaginary, because journalism functions in the in-betweens of the public and the private and distributes certain ideas and representations of reality to a large number of recipients. ‘A culturally framed autobiographical memory integrates the sociocultural with the personal, and the self that emerges from this process is explicitly and implicitly shaped by its environment’s norms and values’ (van Dijck 2007: 4). I want to suggest that journalism as a part of a larger media-scape is that mediating factor which communicates the norms and values of the surroundings as well as it is affected by the ‘autobiographical’ and personal narratives. The journalists as social subjects in turn are always already embedded and embodied in the social imaginary. It is this definition of the journalistic role and subject-position which I will use later on to make a call for an ethics of relations between journalistic practice and the other following my conclusions in chapter 1. This in turn alters the terms of what ‘we’ as receivers of journalistic outputs have come to expect and demand of professional



journalistic ‘objectivity’ – i.e., a kind of overview provided by a detached position of the journalist-subject, which keeps him or her from being implicated in the ‘facts’ – and to which I will return. I would go so far as to say that an absolutist norm of objectivity is replaced by a dynamic notion of ethical interaction using my thoughts and theories based in phenomenology in chapter 1 and below. By extension – as I will argue below – this means that the subject-position of the journalists, their embodied subjectivity, is a key element in practising an ethical and accountable journalism and in relation to cultural memory.

### *2.2.1 Production as creativity and becoming*

What I have introduced above about the social imaginary may be compared with the definition of ‘hegemony’ which Raymond Williams gives us in ‘Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory’ (in Williams 2005: 37-40). Hegemony is, in Williams’ reading of Gramsci, ‘saturat[ing] the society to such an extent, and which ... even constitutes the substance and the limits of common sense for most people under its sway, that it corresponds to the reality of social experience’ (2005: 37). I have already discussed in chapter 1 how the construction of certain gendered and racially defined experiences has effectively been a critique of the phenomenological notion of a universal ‘white’ masculine self. The social imaginary – or hegemony – helps to construct and sustain this normative notion of ‘white’ masculinity. Williams makes a suggestion that I want to follow in this dissertation, which is to study hegemony as production rather than object. Hegemony as the key to the social imaginary is not something that can be seen as disassociated from the production and the practices of cultural memory and the role of journalism. The production of the social imaginary is of course not constructed entirely by journalistic practices but is sustained through many different cultural and political practices in time as well as in spatial terms. The focus on journalism is nevertheless crucial in that journalism is one of these practices and a very powerful one, I will argue. Though my case studies and analyses in this dissertation are based on three very different representations, the focus remains constantly on the practices supporting the representations and the production of dissemination of these journalistic practices. This is supported, as I stated above, by an idea of production as creativity (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, Critchley 2007) on which I will elaborate in the following section.



### *2.2.2 Memory and History*

In chapter 1 I briefly mentioned the concept of cultural memory. This concept developed simultaneously via different disciplines, such as literature studies, which have examined the cultural memories of, for instance, apartheid in South Africa (Buikema 2006), and how it is represented in fictional and national narratives. Medical researchers and psychologists have explored how the brain functions when it remembers and have questioned the psychological reverberations of past events. Historian Eric Hobsbawn has convincingly shown how traditions are invented and remembered as being ancient (Hobsbawn 1983) and sociology has developed a field of social memory studies or collective memory (Olick 2008). It is this strand of memory studies with which José van Dijck is working when she develops her theories of the mediated memories (van Dijck 2007) of cultural importance. By way of example of these mediated cultural memories, I return briefly to the example of US presidential candidate Senator Barack Obama's speech about a more perfect union, which, he argues, is in need of a continuation of the work done by the founding fathers. Evoking the collective American historical event of the founding fathers signing a treaty and constitution securing 'liberty and justice for all' triggers a collective feeling of belonging due to the common cultural understanding of what this constitutional memory means. There is a point in using the terminology of memory rather than history when analysing Senator Obama's speech(act). Senator Obama's speech is, in public debates (see, for instance, on YouTube), linked to the Rev. Martin Luther King's speeches about mutual respect between 'white' and 'black' North Americans some forty years ago and his fight for equal civil rights (see also introduction to chapter 1). Senator Obama's speeches of national unification and the founding fathers, coupled with the public memory linking Martin Luther King to Senator Obama allows the US public to embrace the Civil Rights Movement as a continuation of the Constitution and as such as a struggle common to all US citizens. The demonstrations, sit-ins and happenings that created the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and forced American society to change through reformation of the racist systems of public segregation, was however necessary because US society was not then united in the decision to respect and acknowledge all citizens as equal. It is then a reformulation of the historical memory of the struggles for civil rights, which is arguably the goal of Senator Obama's campaign, however, it simultaneously runs the risk of glossing over the violent and racist history of the United States as a nation.



Cultural memories are not historical lists of the events and political decisions that make up a current society, but a narrated and experienced structure which creates a sensory and productive sense of belonging. They may draw on cultural myths and legends as well<sup>30</sup> in their function of establishing a feeling of social belonging and cohesion.

The concept of memory is often connected entirely to the personal function, but though personal and collective memory may seem to function via two different mechanisms, both personal memory and collective memory are triggered by external elements (Poole 2008). Moreover personal and collective memory cannot be separated but mutually shape each other. José van Dijck (2007) develops the concept of ‘personal cultural memory’ and defines it as: *‘the acts and products of remembering in which individuals engage to make sense of their lives in relation to the lives of others and to their surroundings, situating themselves in time and place’* (van Dijck 2007:6. Italics in original). Because of the interdependence of personal and collective memory (van Dijck 2007) I want to suggest that journalism is the ‘acts and products of remembering’ in which all – journalists and non-journalists – ‘engage to make [sensory and experimental] sense of [our] lives in relation to the lives of others...’ The interaction makes the missing rupture between personal and collective memory even more pertinent in the recent developments of civic journalism and blogging, which spread the power of editing journalism among more journalist and non-journalist actors and allow non-journalistic subjectivities to interact and produce journalistic products. I will return to this subject matter shortly and in chapter 3.

It makes sense to speak of cultural or collective memory, because like personal memory it is a form of recollection which is common to a given culture. Moreover, memory – rather than history – calls upon morality. That is, one can be held responsible for forgetting certain things that one should have remembered, and in the same vein cultural memory makes moral claims of accountability possible (Poole 2008). Cultural memories form a coherent representation of a common culture and identity, but they need to be repeated in order to continue having an effect and so a

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<sup>30</sup> The importance of myths and legends to the construction of cultural memory and a feeling of social belonging will become clear in the case study of the US Virgin Islands, the former colonies of Denmark.



concept, which paraphrases the work of van Dijck (2007), may be coined and termed ‘journalistic cultural memory’. My approach is in keeping with some of the key tenets of phenomenological accounts of the subject and thus results in foregrounding the concept of journalistic cultural memory and in stressing the importance of the politics of perception, in terms of sensory and embodied experience of an other that is structurally necessary to the self. That is, I am arguing for an embodied and embedded journalistic cultural memory.

In the hands of the French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, memory is further exploded into a creative and singular concept. Instead of employing the fixating concept of History, Deleuze and Guattari suggest using memory as a tool of re-creating the past in lines of flight, deterritorialised and singular. Reading Deleuze and Guattari, Adrian Parr (2006) divides memory into two. First there is memory as reterritorialisation, a fixing of an event in which History ‘monumentalize[s] the past’, when history is stated as an inherent not created value (such as the case of psychoanalysis). The event of, for instance, the re-enactment of a historical event in order to commemorate the event and its social and political consequences is one of many ways of repeating the cultural memories. It is also a part of a punctual system of History – that is, a majoritarian reterritorialisation. Secondly, Parr draws from readings of Deleuze and Guattari a notion of ‘singular memory’ (Parr 2006: 130). What becomes important in ‘singular memory’ or memory as ahistorical force (minoritarian) is its concern with ‘history of desire-production’ (Parr 2006: 135). Deleuze and Guattari emphasise the creative and productive notion of desire. This notion presupposes a future because it deals with the creative force of *production* in repetition in terms of *difference* (producing difference in repetition). The creative productive dimension of desire in repetition ‘contains within a seed for a creative dimension to memory’, Parr writes. In this way the Deleuzian conceptualisation moreover links memory to imagination.<sup>31</sup> Deleuze and Guattari’s notions of historical deterritorialisation and creative production of memory allow me to think of journalism as simultaneously production (Williams) and poetics (Glissant) – that is, as sensuous and sensory relation. Journalism thus holds a privileged position in the (re)formation of the social imaginary as a site of belonging.

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<sup>31</sup> The uses of Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas of history will be discussed in case study 1



My project is, then, to show on the following pages how journalism, particularly in the Danish context, operationalises the connections between the social imaginary, journalistic cultural memory, and potential dynamics of creativity in terms of epistemological, ethical and political claims. I will define journalism through theorisation of journalistic production starting with the trade's underpinning concepts of objectivity and freedom of expression, and go on to present research conducted on journalism as object in order to position my own contribution. My contribution will be based in moving from object-based to production-focused analyses and to see production as a creative force which it is possible to activate in journalistic practice and theory. This will lay the groundwork for chapter 3, in which I broaden the scope of journalistic relations into a globalised context, theorising it with the usages of the idea of cosmopolitanism.

## 2.3 JOURNALISM OF RELATION

Journalism has been called one of the last modernist bastions 'believing in progress, rationality and universal truth or standards, making it run parallel with modern conceptions of politics' (van Zoonen 2005: 32). Modern journalism rests on two major pillars; freedom of expression or speech<sup>32</sup> and objectivity. In the following I will try to trace the genealogies and the epistemological, ethical and political meanings of these two journalistic concepts in order to discuss theoretically in this chapter and analytically in the rest of the dissertation the consequences of these concepts and the changes they are undergoing in contemporary journalistic practices and in relation to the (ex)changing ideas of the other.

### *2.3.1 Objectivity – epistemological, ethical and political*

The first of these pillars of the modernist profession and practice is, then, the concept of objectivity. Objectivity has had and still has (Wien 2005, Muhlmann 2008) a strong impact on western journalists' understanding of the journalistic practice and function in society. Though the term 'objectivity' may have been changed to the less positivist sounding terms 'impartiality' or 'balanced' reporting, it is still the legacy of the positivist sciences that sustains journalistic legitimacy (Wien 2005: 13, Anderson and

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<sup>32</sup> I will use freedom of expression and freedom of speech interchangeably.



Ward 2007: 46, Muhlmann 2008: 10). In these epistemological terms, the Danish scholar of source criticism in journalism, Charlotte Wien (2005), outlines the way in which the concept of objectivity is still present though disputed in journalistic teaching. Sketching a 'Journalistic Theoretical Map' (Wien 2005: 13), Wien shows that the twin birth of positivism and mainstream journalism in the late nineteenth century has developed through Scientific Journalism, Precision Journalism and lately Computer-Assisted Reporting, whereas it has been challenged by Public Journalism and New Journalism. The latter two question the primacy of journalistic objective reporting by situating the journalist amidst the society and the story, whereas the types of journalism supported by positivist assumptions extend a belief in the journalist's objective ability to represent the world 'as it is' without affecting it. From the beginning, the aim of journalistic practice included unity of the readership – that is constructing a unified 'us'. The increase in readership simultaneously brought about an editorial urge to unite this growing readership under the sign of the factual. The press 'clung to the "facts" so that it could bring together readers who might well have different opinions on a subject, and hence reach a common denominator' (Muhlmann 2008: 6). The US in the 1960s and 1980s provided journalism with New Journalism and Public Journalism, which may be seen as pockets of resistance to the dominating journalistic concept of objectivity by attempting to *decentre* the reader rather than unify them (Muhlmann 2008). I will return to this issue throughout this chapter and in chapter 3.

In this section, however, I want to confront the assumptions of modern journalism's professionalism through a discussion of the underlying principles of the trade. I have chosen to discuss the two major principles of freedom of expression and of objectivity in order to show their abstract nature and the consequences inherent in their character. Moreover, I want to show that taking these tenets of professional journalism at face value the singular journalist-subject risks displacing the responsibilities of response (Derrida 1992) which are crucially bound up with modern journalistic practice. That is, the ethical self-other relation available to journalistic practice is converted into an overarching moralistic consumption of the other through an appropriation of 'us' and 'them'. What I am proposing instead is a less *unifying* journalistic practice built on experience, affects and sensibilities. Within the professional modern practice of journalism it is widely accepted that journalistic objectivity is an ideal that cannot be



reached. This is so because facts are sometimes hidden from the journalist or sometimes certain facts are edited away in order to tell a story in a captivating or more comprehensible manner, and so on. If it is agreed that objectivity is unreachable, each journalist-subject should at least strive towards objectivity and hence objectivity is reformulated into a moral concept. The positivist developments and debates within journalism lead to 'objectivity' being made synonymous with 'fairness' which in turn can be graded (Wien 2005: 9). That is, one can give a more or less fair report and thus be more or less objective. In Denmark one of the university-based facilities that provides training for journalists, the University of Southern Denmark, and which according to Wien makes use of the ideal of scientific, epistemological objectivity in its educational syllabus (Wien 2005: 12), recently developed a professional pledge of responsibility and accountability. This pledge or oath is in line with the Hippocratic Oath for medical doctors and it was developed in order to instil and secure quality and creativity in the journalistic practice and profession.<sup>33</sup> The oath states that the journalist 'persistently and with an open mind will seek out and communicate the best obtainable version of the truth'.<sup>34</sup> The journalism which is produced will be 'independent', 'fair' and transparent in its methods, the oath proclaims. This is not far from the declaration made by Walter Williams (in 1908)<sup>35</sup>, which the Centre for Journalism and its students at the University of Southern Denmark kept in mind while developing their own oath. Williams also speaks of 'accuracy' and 'fairness' and to 'write only what [the journalist] holds in his heart to be true'. But whereas Williams begins his text by stating that he believes in 'the profession of journalism', the Danish students' pledge emphasises the personal responsibility in their formulations and the fact that journalism is serving the public.<sup>36</sup> To the journalist students, then, objectivity is an ethical connection or contract between the journalist and the public provided through the practices of journalism – accuracy and truthfulness. The connection implicitly builds on a common denominator of what is fact and of who 'we' are, though this embeddedness goes unrecognised and unmentioned in the pledge described here.

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<sup>33</sup> [http://www.sdu.dk/Om\\_SDU/Institutter\\_centre/C\\_Journalistik/Nyt\\_journalistik/varm\\_luft\\_kold\\_tid.aspx](http://www.sdu.dk/Om_SDU/Institutter_centre/C_Journalistik/Nyt_journalistik/varm_luft_kold_tid.aspx) (accessed 29 July 2008).

<sup>34</sup> The pledge of responsibility is written in Danish. All references to the text in this chapter are translated by me.

<sup>35</sup> [http://www.sdu.dk/Om\\_SDU/Institutter\\_centre/C\\_Journalistik/Nyt\\_journalistik/forste\\_lofte.aspx](http://www.sdu.dk/Om_SDU/Institutter_centre/C_Journalistik/Nyt_journalistik/forste_lofte.aspx) (accessed 29 July 2008)

<sup>36</sup> 'My journalism exists for the citizens' (my translation).



Another side to the issue of ethical objectivity centres on the media institutions which employ journalists. By placing emphasis on media institutions' politico-ethical economic structures in relation to issues of ownership or to the amount of state subsidies received for public service engagements (Anderson and Ward 2007: 45-6) the journalist-subject as an ethical relation is circumscribed and displaced. The displacement neglects to perceive journalistic practice as something which can be culturally, religiously, gendered or ethnically affected on the level of the singular journalist-subject. The journalist-subject is placed within a larger political structure of global capitalism and consumerism which leaves little or no room for journalistic subjectivity.<sup>37</sup> In other words, the ethical accountability of the journalist-subject is murky at best, or it is merged with the institution of journalistic practice either as it functions in a given society at large or as a particular and known media institution such as, for instance, Rupert Murdoch's media group, the BBC or (in more abstract terms) as the Fourth Estate. The function of the idea of the Fourth Estate, Anderson and Ward (2007) remark, may both be understood as a journalistic 'watchdog' function, which guards the interest of the people, or it may be seen as a political power on its own, which then – again – begs the question of ethical and epistemological objectivity or bias. Epistemologically, however, the journalist-subject may be seen as failing if s/he writes something that turns out to be incorrect.<sup>38</sup> Accuracy in the journalistic production therefore matters (especially to the journalist) but more often than not objectivity in terms of ethical decisions and coverage of cases belongs to the journalist-subject's employer and his or its politico-economic interests. It is moreover impossible to discern who the journalist-subject is and to whom s/he is writing. The disembodiedness of the positivistic modern ethical and social contract provides a pretext for the singular journalist-subjects not to be accountable and take responsibility for the relations developed through the journalistic practice. The desire to disembody journalistic practice in order to unite a necessarily very diverse

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<sup>37</sup> I understand subjectivity to mean a subject which continuously constitutes relations of power. That is, an agency which allows the subject to be affected and embodied as part of his or her constitution. It is a process rather than a static identity formation. I will return to the issue of subjectivity later on in this chapter and throughout the dissertation. See also chapter 1.

<sup>38</sup> 'Correct' or 'false' is not always the issue, though. Rather the issue is whether the receiver, the audience, has realised the editing power of journalism and therefore feels cheated. Such cases are rarely discussed in terms of ethics, but in terms of good or bad journalistic craftsmanship. This in turn connects to the training of journalists and the belief in the ethical validity of journalistic craftsmanship as discussed above. I will also come back to this in much more detail below.



readership or viewer/listener audience helps to construct the social imaginary as homogeneous and in dialectic relation to the other.

On the one hand, when examining the angle of students and practitioners of journalism, the function of journalistic objectivity neglects to acknowledge the always embeddedness of the journalist in the social imaginary. On the other hand, discussing journalism without the journalist-subject as a major factor misses the point of journalistic subjectivity. By use of the idea of journalistic cultural memory, I want to keep the relation between the social imaginary and journalistic practice in flux and not allow for a distinction separating the two interdependent and intermingling concepts. Journalistic cultural memory is created by or always already embodied and embedded in journalistic subjectivity.

### *2.3.2 Service to the public*

Journalism is rarely discussed without mentioning democracy and the increase of entertainment – that is commercialisation and consumerism – mainly on television (Zoonen 2005, Anderson and Ward 2007) at the expense of journalistic involvement in democratic processes. Ethico-politically in welfare-states like the Scandinavian countries and the United Kingdom, this topic is dealt with in debates about ‘public service’ commitments, which are widely discussed in the countries that make use of this journalistic obligation. Several different modes of democracy in the western world call for different journalistic functions (Anderson and Ward 2007) in order to facilitate a democratically engaged citizenry, but entertainment is hardly ever seen as one of these potential functions. However, entertainment may not necessarily have a negative influence on political participation in democratic societies (Zoonen 2005). Feminist media theorist, Liesbeth van Zoonen (2005) argues that the narratives of soap operas and the emotional strengths of, for instance, music and personal identifications with politicians may prove an alternative way of engaging the public in democratic participation.<sup>39</sup> They may also provide a break from the modernist assumption often underlying this idea of political democracy and which is shared by

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<sup>39</sup> The winner of the special award for development media in the One World Media Awards 2008 is an example of the democratic powers of popular media and soap operas. The winner, ‘Urunana Development Communication’ from Rwanda, is a radio programme which through an audio soap opera engages and informs the people of Rwanda about politics and health issues etc. ([www.owbt.org/pages/Awards/awards2008/winners/special\\_award.html](http://www.owbt.org/pages/Awards/awards2008/winners/special_award.html) accessed 22 June 2008).



journalism and positivism. The assumption is that there are a limited number of ways to involve the public in democratic processes (Anderson and Ward 2007). This is the idea of a politically journalistic ‘objectivity’ at its core, which can be compared with the Habermasian ‘public sphere’ founded on an informed citizenry, which is sustained by rational argumentation and (objective) facts. The modes of activating democratic interest and engagement are based on a journalism that appeals to the rationality of the citizens at the expense of emotionality and affects. Though I will not pursue van Zoonen’s counter-argument and her interest in entertainment for the citizen, I find her analyses and open-mindedness towards another kind of journalistic or information paradigm important because she dares to challenge the dominant paradigm within media and journalistic studies.<sup>40</sup> Following from my hesitation towards the Habermasian approach I moreover disagree with Pierre Bourdieu’s argument (Bourdieu 2005: 31) for a ‘field theoretical’ approach to journalistic analysis in which the discursive field of journalism instead of the journalist-subject is analysed and held accountable. This sort of analysis runs the risk of what I have called displacing the ethical connection entirely to the ‘field’ of ‘the media’ and thus circumscribing the producing journalist-subject and his or her accountability to the society of/to which s/he writes and his or her embeddedness in the production of its cultural memories. Rather I think it fruitful to return the burden of responsibility and accountability for journalistic expressions to the journalist-subjects and their personally experienced associations to the other. However, in order to do that other journalistic ethics need to be developed. A journalistic subjectivity which sees the journalist-subject as not-one – that is always already a relation – is necessary to avoid resurrecting the journalistically graded objectivity. I will return to this throughout the chapter and in the following chapter.

In relation to the debates of ‘public service’, the question of the ethico-political role of freedom of expression is pivotal. I will turn to this issue next in order to unfold its ethical implications and its relationship to ethical and epistemological objectivity.

### *2.3.3 Freedom of expression*

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<sup>40</sup> A further pursuit of the debates about ‘public service’ would go beyond the scope of this dissertation. However I will return to the issue of ‘public service’ briefly in the discussion of freedom of expression.



Most ‘western’ democratic countries operate with a formal notion of freedom of speech<sup>41</sup> but not a material freedom of speech, which would mean that no laws could prohibit for, for instance, hate speech or discrimination. Formal freedom of speech was introduced after the French Revolution to secure for the people access to the uncensored truth and to guarantee that the state could not withhold information in oppression of its people. Freedom of speech was, then, a tool to counteract potential state control. It was a freedom *from* state-controlled information. In the example of Denmark, theories of media responsibility have led to organisational policies among local newspapers describing good journalistic conduct and the two national TV stations in Denmark, DR and TV2, have, respectively, fully and partly public service obligations and are respectively fully and partly financially compensated by the state. These sorts of regulations underline the rights of minorities in the societies to communicate and secure a positive definition of freedom of expression as a freedom *to* communicate rather than a freedom *from* interference from the state (Drotner, Bruhn Jensen, Poulsen and Schrøder 2002: 312-13). Moreover, ‘[a]n important function of the media, and of journalists in particular, has been and remains the exposure of corruption in all its manifold forms and it is one that is crucial to the fair and effective working of democracy’ (Anderson and Ward 2007: 19). Freedom of speech, then, serves both to allow the public a voice to speak up against the powers that be (that is the right to be heard (Silverstone 2007)) and the right to be informed. Journalists are the keepers of this tool of communication and are left with the power to determine what the ‘public’ wants and needs and how it wants it presented (Berry 2005). As defenders of freedom of expression they are granted extensive rights and freedoms to formulate this defence as ‘accurately’ as possible. The concept of objectivity – ethically as well as epistemologically – is therefore closely related to freedom of expression in that the journalistic definition of ‘impartial’ and ‘fair’

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<sup>41</sup> In the case of Denmark, censorship was reinstated during the Napoleonic Wars in 1810 after some hundred years of partial and full freedom of expression. Denmark’s long on-and-off history of censorship was determined by the reformed Lutheran Church and the universities from 1537 to 1660 when autocracy was instated. Censorship was then enforced mainly by the Deans of the universities and otherwise by royal appointed authorities, until Johan Friedrich Struense, doctor to the king and private secretary of the queen, had censorship written out of the national laws in 1770. But then the Napoleonic Wars took place. It was not until 1848, however, when the nation wrote its first national constitution, that freedom of expression was implemented for good. The paragraph in the Danish Constitution which secures freedom of expression ends with the promise that censorship can never be re-instituted.



reporting holds within it the definition of who ‘the public’ is, wants and thinks is ‘truthful’ and ‘fair’.

Though international journalistic associations have formulated proclamations to serve the truth (Drotner et al. 2002, Berry 2005, Muhlmann 2008), this truth has increasingly been seen as serving a ‘common public’. This gives journalism its *unifying* function (Muhlmann 2008) but it also problematises the issues, because when the public is seen as being one entity to which the truth is served, it is assumed that the truth is the same for everybody – objectively – and not a subjective construction.

[J]ournalism addresses a public perceived as a unified entity, or at least as an entity that is capable of being unified, and that has a right to obtain what is its due, that is, a description which is not exclusively singular, but applies the criteria of common sense and so presents a *common* reality. (Muhlmann 2008: 9).

The public is thus represented as one entity with rights. That is, it is a conscious rational idea of citizenship. The ‘criteria of common sense’ that Muhlmann (2008) is introducing in her political history of journalism, however, is not solely political. I argue that it is simultaneously and interdependently political and personal because of the binding and creative function of journalistic cultural memory in the social imaginary, defined in a previous section of this chapter. The truth which journalism is serving is not based on political ideas of citizenship alone, but on ethnically, gendered, religious, national and cultural assumptions of national unity as well. The function of journalism as public memory is not about catastrophes alone but is in equal measures about the ‘soft’ news that affirms ‘our’ identity (Kitch 2008). I will qualify this statement shortly when presenting media research in the Danish context and it will be discussed in detail below.

Within the history of mainstream, unifying journalistic production, *decentring* journalism (Muhlmann 2008) has a history of its own of resisting the unifying function of journalism. In Muhlmann’s words: ‘Decentring journalists put themselves in a position of “non-belonging” to “us” in order to provoke a conflict which touches on the collective identity; they confront “us” by means of an exteriority-otherness, and in this way undo us’ (Muhlmann 2008: 30). That is, decentring journalism turns the



investigative journalistic gaze on ‘us’ rather than ‘them’ by taking the position of ‘them’. However, readily recognisable is the risk of turning the marginalised other, ‘them’, into a new *unified* entity – that is reconstructing a centre of perception. Another identifiable risk is of misrepresenting the other, that the decentring journalist, rather than shifting location to the marginalised, shifts his or her location to a false representation. Here questions of journalistic assumptions of ‘authenticity’ appear.<sup>42</sup> I have already mentioned the practices of New Journalism and Public Journalism and recent developments in media structures and journalistic practices seem also to challenge the unifying function, but circumventing journalistic practice in the process. ‘Civic journalism’ in which the-man-on-the-street becomes the eye, ‘I’, of the news story through mobile phone cameras, is a more recent example of how the unifying reporting is changing. The London underground bombing in July 2005 and the tsunami catastrophe in the Indian Ocean in December 2004 are examples of how civilians’ recordings of events have an impact on journalistic reporting. The internet provides facilities for a number of minority media outlets such as feminist, queer and other activist and migrant groups (Gill 2007) that connect people in virtual communities. The concept of ‘blogging’ has taken on a life of its own, providing online readers with subjective opinions and more or less qualified analyses of almost everything in the news, in life and in politics. These developments provoke a ‘shift in power from the newsroom to the connected online and digital world. [Journalism] must become networked’ (Beckett 2008). The developments moreover challenge the concept of epistemological as well as ethical objectivity and the traditional function of formal freedom of speech. The concept of objectivity is challenged through the obvious subject-position of these new de facto journalists and journalistic practices, but because the ideal of objectivity (in the definitions discussed above) is the foundation for freedom of speech the latter is simultaneously questioned. The question is who has the freedom to speak – that is who is being heard – when we can no longer hold that objectivity persists?<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> An in-depth discussion of the claim of ‘authenticity’ in relation to journalistic practice is beyond the scope of this chapter.

<sup>43</sup> In case study 3, I argue that this is the very crux of the case of the Danish ‘cartoon controversy’. It is a case of journalistic institutions becoming political protagonists in their own news stories, when in the second round of the cartoon controversy in Denmark (2008) a unified Danish press reprinted the cartoons as a protest against alleged plans to kill one of the cartoonists. In this case the journalists (the tool of freedom of speech) were both the subject and the object of the story and more than that they were a story that was initiated because of this very tool – freedom of speech. It is then, I think, possible to rephrase the question of the journalists’ speaking positions in the cartoon controversy into a question



As already argued, journalism is deeply implicated in the construction of the social imaginary and the unification of the national ‘us’ through reiterations and productions of journalistic cultural memories. Through the conceptualisation of objectivity, which either splits the journalist-subject from the cultural production of collective memories or displaces ethics to the economic and political realm of the market and the epistemological function to the democratic notion of freedom of expression, journalistic practice seems to neglect acknowledgement of journalist-subjective accountability and embodied subjectivity. The consequences of this unacknowledged interdependence become clear in the case of the Danish social imaginary, which through the media and journalistic cultural memories is perceived and experienced as homogeneously white and Christian. To qualify this statement, next I will discuss some research done in the field of media analysis in Denmark, particularly focused on the representation of the ethnic other in order to explore the implications.

## 2.4 THE JOURNALISTIC CULTURAL MEMORIES OF THE DANISH SOCIAL IMAGINARY

Following van Dijk (2007) I argued for a privileged position of journalism in the making of cultural memories. I positioned journalistic productions as *the* acts and products which through reiterations and repetitions construct personal as well as collective memories and thus a sense of belonging. Journalistic cultural memories are then informing an ‘us’ which relates to an ‘other’ on personal and collective cultural levels simultaneously. As an introduction to the case studies in this dissertation I will dwell a bit on the particular journalistically-mediated imaginary dominant in Denmark. The studies on which I base my reading of the Danish journalistically-mediated social imaginary reflect discourse analysis of journalistic products as well as ethnographic studies of Danish newsrooms. They are therefore both representing a media-analytic and a practical approach to journalistic practice and implications. Foregrounding Denmark’s journalistically-mediated social imaginary gives me the opportunity to make the particularities available. Simultaneously, Denmark’s social imaginary is here presented as a prototype of a perceived homogeneous society.

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of how the Danish press, in the name of journalistic freedom of speech, that is, the freedom to serve the public with the truth as accurately as possible – present their readers with their united political convictions without discussing their position in relation to epistemological, but certainly ethical, objectivity?



#### *2.4.1 Research on Danish journalists and the other*

The academic work done in this field is far from overwhelming in quantity, though new networks are being formed and research planned in recent years. However limited it is, the work on the relevance and importance of the other in the construction of the socially imagined 'us' helps me to understand the political as well as social ramifications of the inflexibility of the social imaginary in Danish journalistic discourse. A report published by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (2002) about racism and xenophobia in the mass media in the European Union (EU) member states testifies to the exclusionary and homogeneously 'white' construction of Danish practices of the social imaginary. Moreover, '[m]inorities [in Denmark] are not only seen as an out-group, but also as a threat to Danish culture and society' (Hussain 2002: 107). According to this report, on the parliamentary political level Denmark is the least interested of the Scandinavian countries in topics concerning minorities, which was emphasised by the government declining to take part in Nordic initiatives focusing on minorities and racism. It is underlined, furthermore, that a 'new racism' or covert racism is the norm rather than the exception to the rule (Hussain 2002: 113-14). Regarding the media and press corps, the report additionally finds that the Danish media exclude minorities as sources of expert knowledge, as well as potential receivers of the news stories (Hussain 2002: 110-12). Some of these journalistic as well as political attitudes may have changed since the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in 2001 and the cartoon controversy in 2005-6 and 2008, though whether it is for the better concerning inclusion of minorities is not at all a given. As a matter of fact, the latest Danish research shows that Danish journalism has a long and persistent history of excluding, via stereotyping and dichotomising (Andreassen 2007).

#### *2.4.2 Research identifying white, religious bias in Danish journalism*

This rather bleak conclusion as to the Danish media representation and subsequent social and political attitudes towards others – or not native Danes – is also reflected historically. Related to the journalistic products not much has changed since 11 September 2001. In fact, analysing the journalistic news products, Danish media scholar Rikke Andreassen finds that the journalistic stereotyping and exclusion from the representation of the Danish collective 'us' has not changed much throughout the



thirty-three years included in her study (Andreassen 2005, 2007). Andreassen's historical perspective shows that the stereotypes of migrants used in Danish journalistic production are persistent and are implemented and sustained through repetition as well as through sophisticated narrative structures (Andreassen 2005: 286). The journalists do not sustain racist stereotypes deliberately, Andreassen believes. However she attributes the emergence of one particular stereotype in the 1990s – which portrays the migrant man as perpetually criminal – to the added focus on dramatic news narration. That is, it is the journalistic understanding and definition of 'the good story', the formatting of the journalistic craft, that has changed. This new focus is due to increased competition between the national television company (DR) and a new company (TV2), which commenced broadcasting for the first time in 1989.

Journalistic products help to construct a Danish identity and nationality as different from the identity of the other, mainly through the marking or 'bracketing off' of the other. Whereas 'visible minorities' are labelled 'ethnic', 'foreign', or 'second-generation-immigrants', Danes (particularly men) are represented as unmarked and unlabelled. In the media, holding Danish citizenship is not enough to be recognised as a Dane, rather Danish nationality is constructed as 'closely connected to whiteness, to the white race' (Andreassen 2005: 288). 'Naturalisation' of Danish nationality means that it persists as white and unmarked in the journalistic products and functions as the norm through which otherness is defined as un-Danish. Moreover, a gendered perspective adds a critique of the masculine norm of whiteness (Andreassen 2005, 2007).

The Danish public and political debates often conflate the notion of 'migrant' with the notion of 'Moslem' (Andreassen 2005, 2007, Jensen 2006a), which makes a discussion of the religious values and beliefs relevant to the discussion of the Danish social imaginary reflected in media analyses. Relating to the attitudes of the editors and the journalists, Tim Jensen (2006a) conducted a study in 2003 focusing on policies and attitudes towards religion of the editors and journalists from the four largest national newspapers in Denmark. In the study, producers of news were asked about their structural as well as personal relation to religion. Jensen concluded that the journalists and editors in question 'show remarkably little interest in the way their notion(s) of religion, and consequently their writing about religion, reflect and



perpetuate a historical and partly religious notion of religion' (Jensen 2006a: 132-3). Interestingly, Jensen moreover notes that the journalists' and editors' relations to religion and especially to their ideas of what constitutes 'true' religion are powerfully informed by Lutheran-Protestant Christian classifications. 'True' religion, Jensen's interviewees assert, 'belongs to the heart of the individual' (Jensen 2006a: 133). This definition is 'naturalised' by the journalists and consequently other perceptions of religion – such as collectively or structurally and ritually informing and informed religions – are bound to be the object of journalistic critical interrogation, ridicule or silencing. In other words, religions that are not Lutheran-Protestant Christian are othered in the Danish media, and because 'to a lot of people [religion] is what the media makes (of) it' (Jensen 2006a: 134) the Danish social imaginary is constructed as Lutheran-Protestant. In summary, the unthinkingly transference of structures of omissions and of 'naturalisations' are an integral part of people's (journalists, editors, and layperson's) lives – that is the social imaginary. Thus, both Jensen (2006a, 2006b) and Andreassen (2005, 2007) conclude that racism is not deliberately perpetuated by the journalists and that it is rather unthinking transfers of unacknowledged assumptions which are the reasons for the discriminating and dichotomising journalistic products. I want to argue that it is the little interest shown and the inability to question one's own position, which lays the groundwork for an unacknowledged reproduction of stereotypes and discrimination.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the journalist-subjects interviewed by Jensen show exactly the journalistic relation to objectivity I characterised above as neglecting to acknowledge the always embeddedness of the journalist in the social imaginary.

The reiterated conclusions above show the general lines of the Danish media and press corps. They are based on a historical framework and aim to name a common problem in the function of Danish journalistic practice. I argue later in this chapter and throughout the case studies in the dissertation that journalism also holds a potential for change through the practices of the singular journalist-subject.

### *2.4.3 Postcolonial theory and journalism*

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<sup>44</sup> The issue of unacknowledged traces of religious and white and racist views in Danish journalistic production will be analysed and exemplified in depth in the case studies.



Though quantitatively limited, the research conducted to study the link between Danish journalism and products and minorities shows that mainstream Danish journalism is based on an assumption which identifies ethnic and/or religious minorities as outside the Danish social imaginary. This means that minorities are not being represented through journalistic cultural memory. They are not the subjects of expert knowledge unless they speak on behalf of the minority to which they are seen to belong. They are not considered part of the ‘common’ reader block – the unified ‘us’ – either. Danish nationality is represented in the media as a white and Protestant-Lutheran nationality, and the journalists unthinkingly transfer these assumptions into their work, as the research shows.

In Danish journalism, ethical and epistemological objectivity seems to be white in colour. For instance, in the case concerning the Danish cartoon controversy, which I deal with in case study 3, debates circled internally in the Danish Journalists’ Association around the issue of the political right- and left-wing views of the journalist-subjects and the news and media institutions for which they worked,<sup>45</sup> rather than cultural, ethnic or gendered subjectivities and memory. That is, the ethical questions were placed in a political landscape, whereas the journalistic subjectivity in terms of the discursive power and affects of the singular journalist-subject was overlooked to a large extent. Jensen (2006b) also analyses the cartoon controversy events in the light of the intense nationalistic turn Danish politics has taken during the last ten to fifteen years. But as Andreassen (2007) has pointed out, when it comes to nationalism, traditional political right or left ties seem to be transgressed and dispersed in favour of trans-political positions. Thus the focus of this dissertation is less on political positions and more on the singular ethical actor in the political game: the journalist-subject, that is, the singular journalist subjectivity thought and experience within the paradigm of not-one, who authors a news story, and his or her ethical always-existing relation to the other. My point is that the news story may seem to possess self-explanatory criteria defined by the journalistic craft encompassing the criteria of objectivity as to what makes it a good or relevant story. This is the inherent claim to authority and objectivity which journalism possesses. However I want to argue that it is structured by the journalist-subject’s religious, cultural and social

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<sup>45</sup> The discussion was summed up in the monthly professional journal, *Journalisten* (2006) No. 5..



imaginary which in turn is part of a collective cultural memory, and non-memory. The latter may include neglected, denied or ignored memories of, for instance, colonialism, slavery or collaboration with the German occupation during the Second World War. This seemingly invisible cultural origin of news criteria is, as argued above, due to the ‘naturalisation’ of the white social imaginary of the professional attitudes of objectivity and Fourth Estate-ism held by journalists and editors. This can be seen as a form of abstract universalism that begs the question of the journalists’ perception of their own situated position and hence also of their cultural memory and their embeddedness in the social imaginary. The power of perception is strong, as argued in the previous chapter, and lack of self-awareness breeds ignorance of self, but also of others.

It seems to me that in order to change the media – in terms of news criteria, usage of expert sources, and inclusion of members of minorities to the workforce<sup>46</sup> – a change in attitude to and new theories of what it means to have journalistic subjectivity is desperately needed. Norwegian scholar and journalist Elisabeth Eide (2002) also recognises the analogous histories of the press and of the national self-perception, and advocates a professional and analytical ‘reflexive “dual vision”’ (Eide 2002: 329) on the issue of journalistic practice and research. Eide concludes from her analyses of a Norwegian magazine, *A-magasinet*, that a hierarchical power relation exists between Norwegian journalists and the internal as well as external others. Eide’s analytical models are postcolonialism, discourse analysis and Bourdieu’s field theory (Eide 2006) – three analytical models, which Eide sees as informing each other. Through her re-readings of the journalistic magazine, Eide argues for a professional reflexivity. This professional reflexivity may take the form of imagining the perspective of the other looking at the cultural, professional or individual self (Eide 2002: 334-5). Eide argues for a ‘journalism of reciprocal relativization’ (Eide 2002: 336) which recognises the other in a mutual relation of ‘learning and questioning one’s own framework of interpretation’ (Eide 2002: 336). Eide’s project is one of *decentring* journalism, as discussed above. Though I am sympathetic to Eide’s

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<sup>46</sup> The issue of ‘minorities’ in the journalistic workforce obviously takes different forms in different societies which uphold different political systems and laws dealing with migration and relations to the other. Recently in the UK the broadcasting companies were blamed for putting too many people of ‘minority’ descent on the screens and without reflecting on their diversities, while the powerful positions in the organisations are still predominantly white and male (Holmwood 2008).



argument and project, I find the same problems with her project as I identified in the project of *decentring* journalism. The notion of imagining the self as the other runs the risk of establishing another centre of perception by taking a marginal, but fixed, position. The journalist-subject's position must always remain decentring in relation to its topic and the cultural memories produced if this position is to hold any currency. Eide's notion of 'reciprocal relativisation' also poses obstacles because the concept misrepresents the power positions. Moreover, the 'duality' suggested by Eide allows for an interpretation of the journalistic subject position to be both inside and outside the social imaginary. In my reading of the social imaginary this is not a possibility, we are all already embedded in the social imaginary. The journalist-subject is no exception. I opt for recognition of the always already asymmetrical power relations, but I will come back to this argument in chapter 3.

An incorporation of minorities into the social imaginary and an acknowledgement of the fact that the other is a part of 'us' (Jensen 2006a: 134) – that is, to reach an understanding of the social imaginary as multilayered and ever-moving and (ex)changing – is timely and has to be addressed in a twofold strategy. Firstly, another idea of the journalist-subject needs to be introduced to journalistic thinking. The social imaginary needs to be related to the subject position of the journalist and thus to question the ethical relation between the journalist and the other. I do this by proposing a critical approach to cultural memory as it relates to and sustains the concept of the social imaginary. Not only does the receiver of the journalistic message, whose subject position would be rethought, diversified and understood differently, but also the journalists themselves need to challenge their own subjectivity and role in maintaining the social imaginary. And this challenge, I believe, is not met through ideas of relativity and reciprocity, but rather through creativity and relation as I argued in chapter 1. In chapter 1 I argued for two points constituting the self-other relation. The first point is of 'relation' and it goes to the concept of subjectivity as always already being 'not-one'. In chapter 1, I referred to Simone de Beauvoir's idea of the other as the condition for the ethical turn of the self and I engaged Rosi Braidotti's reference to a collective consciousness-raising as an ethico-political movement towards change. Introducing the second point, of creativity, I invoked Edouard Glissant's poetics of relation and I argued for creative affirmation. That is, the second point presents a positive openness towards the other and the



production as creativity (Critchley 2007) and affirmative change. Secondly, another understanding of what makes a ‘common’ readership – and humanity – needs to be presented as not only a possibility but as an actuality. That is, the ethical intersubjective bonds connect across vast spaces and combine the macro- and micro-levels of the analysis. The journalist-subject is always already a relation – not-one. See also the following chapter.

Put differently, and in order to make the connection to the earlier discussion, this could be expressed in terms of objectivity and freedom of speech. That is, firstly the journalist-subject’s understanding of objectivity needs to be reflected upon so as to bring to the fore what his or her epistemological ‘truth’ is and in which social imaginary it is embedded. Secondly, the people for whom the journalist is speaking need to be identified. In other words, ethically, whose ‘truth’ is s/he speaking, who is being heard? It is an exploration of the journalist-subject’s self-perception of his or her relation to the other – the community – which s/he writes for and from. It is a matter of the ethics of accountability not to an abstract notion of humanity regulated by a professional code of conduct, but to concretely situated human beings from a diverse range of constituencies. The answers to these questions will constitute an analysis of how the social imaginary is sustained through journalistically-mediated cultural memory.

## 2.5 PERCEPTION OF/AS OTHER

Before I move on to expanding the ethical self-other relation in a global or cosmopolitan scope in the following chapter, I want to ground the theories I have adopted above in ethnographic findings. My attempts at sorting out ethical and epistemological notions and meanings of journalistic objectivity are mirrored in the journalistic practice and theory. I want to repeat my argument for a return of ethical accountability to the journalist-subject through a sample of interviews conducted among journalists working in the US Virgin Islands (USVI). The USVI journalists with whom I had the opportunity to speak during my stays in St Croix and St Thomas<sup>47</sup> can sketchily be divided into two groups<sup>48</sup>; the *professional* journalist and

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<sup>47</sup> Between 2 and 22 February 2008 I recorded interviews with Shari Wiltshire, Stephanie Hanlon and Tom Eader from *The St Croix Avis*; Ayesha Morris and Aesha Duval from *The Daily News*; and Bill Kossler from *The Source*. I moreover spoke to an investigative reporter at *The Daily News*, Tim Fields.



the *personal* journalist. These categories, which will become apparent shortly, stand in correspondence to Muhlmann's *unifying* and *decentring* journalistic practices. However, my intervention here is not a theorisation of journalistic products; rather I am attempting to discuss the journalist-subjects' understanding of their own relation between their subjectivities, their practices, and the community in which they function. The two categories allow the journalist-subjects to negotiate different approaches to and degrees of consideration given to the concepts of journalistic objectivity and un-biased reporting. They make apparent the different uses of the concept within the practice of journalism and in which way journalistic craftsmanship takes precedence in these definitions. These categories are fluid, however, and complicated at times, but for the time being they provide a way of speaking about journalistic subjectivities and their relations to the community in and for which they produce their journalism in a somewhat structured manner. I will here present the framework given through the two groups of journalistic subjectivity, based on semi-structured interviews<sup>49</sup> with journalists in St Croix and St Thomas in order to develop further what I mean by the concept of journalistic subjectivity.

In the same way as the Danish social imaginary makes for a prototype in understanding the self-perception and the journalistically-produced cultural memory within Denmark, the Caribbean former colonies of Denmark, the United States Virgin Islands (USVI), provide a uniquely diverse view into the negotiations of journalist positioning and subjectivities. The USVI were Danish colonies for more than 250 years. Danish rule ended with the sale of the islands to the US in 1916. Though the islands can be said to be postcolonial in their relation to Denmark, they are at the same time neo-imperially ruled. St Croix, St John and St Thomas are mere territories of the US. The USVI are moreover situated on the northern half of the Caribbean island chain and the migration and flux among the Caribbean citizens affect these North American islands as well. The diversity of the USVI means that though the vast majority of the USVI population is of African or other black Caribbean descent many

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The following analysis is based on a particular part of the interviews focusing on the self-perception of the journalists regarding their position and relation to the community for which they write and which they simultaneously (re)produce. The 67 people represent close to 50 per cent of the USVI journalist corps of about 15 people.

<sup>48</sup> These categories are of course not sufficient to understand the complexities of the USVI cultural and therefore journalistic reality. I will elaborate on the complexities as the analysis progresses.

<sup>49</sup> See Appendix 1 for an outline of the semi-structured interview.



white, ‘mainland’ North Americans are represented among the journalists. Though the islands are postcolonial and by virtue of this position could be seen as the other of the Danish (journalist-subjects) they are also part of a US neo-imperial cultural export which is merged with the Caribbean, the Danish, and the otherwise European colonial cultures that have left their mark on the islands’ culture and politics.

The categories are discussed through the journalists’ backgrounds as well as their answers in the interview in order to make available analyses of how these cultural, ethnic and gendered backgrounds may or may not correspond to the perspectives taken by the singular journalist-subjects. That is, I am trying to explore the situatedness of the journalistic experience and subjectivity. All of the journalists I spoke to were trained in the US mainland, despite the fact that the University of the Virgin Islands offers a degree in journalism. Three out of the six journalists were of African descent (Ayesha Morris, Aesha Duval, Shari Wiltshire), two of whom were raised in USVI (Duval and Wiltshire). Two of the six journalists were male (both white) (Bill Kossler, Tom Eader), and four out of six were born in the US mainland (Morris, Stephanie Hanlon (who was the only white female in the group), Kossler, Eader). The journalists are employed by the two major newspapers in the USVI, *The Virgin Islands Daily News* (*The Daily News*) and *The St Croix Avis* (*The Avis*).<sup>50</sup> Only Bill Kossler is employed by the online news outlet, *The Source*.

Turning my attention from the Danish to USVI journalist-subjects gives me access to a threefold perspective. Firstly, the USVI journalists write from/to a marginalised position in terms of their postcolonial position in relation to Denmark. Thus, the journalistic subject position of the USVI makes space for a dismantling of the colonial relation to Denmark. This is the *decentring* move of Muhlmann (2007) and Eide (2002). Secondly, the culturally dominant position of the US-trained journalists breaks up the dichotomy of the centre versus margins and questions the power positions of the journalist-subjects. Thirdly, the Caribbean setting and the – after all – diverse backgrounds this situatedness of the journalist-subjects brings with it allows for a further destabilising of categories in the production of reiteration of journalistic cultural memories. This final destabilisation will be developed in the next chapter in

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<sup>50</sup> There is more on these newspapers in case study 1.



which I follow the consequence of my statement that journalist-subjects are always in relation. The journalist-subject therefore is in a multiple relation to the other in a cosmopolitan sense. I will return to this in chapter 3.

### 2.5.1 *The professional journalist*

To the professional journalist, ‘objectivity’ is at the core of working hard and not being lazy (Stephanie Hanlon). This is because ‘objective’ stories are not necessarily balanced stories but they are structured attempts to hear and see everybody’s perspectives on the matter. Objectivity is primarily understood in epistemological terms. If one side of an argument is stronger than the other that should be expressed in the story, believes Stephanie Hanlon from *The Avis*. She explains the way to be objective is to talk to all the people who are involved in a case or might have an interest in the case and then collecting all the gathered knowledge in the article. It is important that the journalist realises that she is wrong sometimes – she can be fooled – and therefore her own opinion should not be part of the story. Being objective, then, is a question of journalistic practice and craftsmanship. Aesha Duval of *The Daily News* puts it like this: ‘You stick to what you are trained to do – you write fair and balanced stories. You present the facts in a way that people can understand’. Both Hanlon and Duval see a journalistic strength in trying to understand the diversity of the culture in/for which they write. Hanlon is from New York and had only been in St Croix for a year at the time of the interview, whereas Duval was born in St Croix, has lived and worked on the US mainland for a number of years and has returned to work first at *The Avis* and now for *The Daily News*. Whereas Duval believes that, through her experience of working in the States she understands what someone from outside the USVI would not know, Hanlon tries to live among and with the local population in the hope that their concerns will be her concerns and thus afford a kind of commonality and understanding. While Duval *decentres* herself in relation to the USVI ‘us’, Hanlon supports a kind of unifying effort in journalistic practice.

However, for Duval, being objective is to ‘be outside of what’s going on’, ‘being an observer and reporting that way’. So though Duval finds that it is a strength to have been abroad and through that experience be able to see a case from outside as well as from inside the community, it is also difficult to write negative stories about her own



neighbourhood, for instance. However, being ‘*ban’ya*’<sup>51</sup> protects her a little, she contends. There is a difference between being a reporter from St Croix and being from the mainland US, she believes: there is more respect surrounding the local reporter. Even though Duval, as quoted above, borders on an argument for *decentring* journalism, both Hanlon and Duval – in their different ways – represent the professional journalist who takes his or her starting point within the practices of journalistic training. Journalism is a practice and if you stick to the practice you will do un-biased reporting. It is clear, however, that both Hanlon and Duval understand that their positioning in the society plays a role in the practice of journalism which they are actively dealing with through their jobs. That is, they realise an ethical dimension to their positions as journalists but not necessarily in the practice.

Another way of confronting the complex matter of positioning the journalistic subject and epistemological objectivity is by taking on and pride in the role of the outsider. Bill Kossler from *The Source* sees himself as an ‘observer’ – a role as an outsider of which he is conscious. Kossler is a white, male mainland US citizen, and his decision to acknowledge his outsider status seems also to be a question of respect for the local population. As in the case of Duval, again though Kossler sees this position as strengthening him in terms of objectivity because ‘you do not have so much at stake’. This could be seen as an unconsciously generated ethical notion of objectivity which Kossler operationalises in that not having personal ‘stakes’ makes him more likely to be ‘fair’. Likewise, Tom Eader of *The Avis* sees his journalistic practice as a conveyor of facts. He reports directly what he is being told, he believes. This ‘conveying’ of facts is supported by journalistic practice but is unreflexive about both the journalistic subjectivity and the embeddedness of Eader as a journalist-subject. The last two examples miss the point and the awareness of the embeddedness of the journalist-subject. The ethical stand becomes a detached ‘abstract individualism’ expressed through journalistic practice rather than a conscious and ethical positioning.

In sum the professional journalist emphasises the practice of journalism and the ideal of standing outside the case in point – despite the fact that the journalists who represent this approach realise the discrepancies involved in this position. The

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<sup>51</sup> ‘*Ban’ya*’ is a local expression for being ‘born here’. Duval believes that her status as ‘local’ gives her street credibility and protects her from criticism.



approach is not determined by the factual position in, and in relation to, the community, though there is a slight preponderance of white, mainland US citizens in this category. The professional journalistic approach makes a split between the journalist-subject and subjectivity explicit. Like Muhlmann's *unifying* journalists, it runs the risk of excluding singular subject positions in the community. Reflection upon for whom the journalist-subject is speaking – whom he or she is giving voice to – is needed. The professional journalist-subject does not acknowledge the embeddedness of his or her position or at least s/he thinks s/he can overcome this through good craftsmanship – that is, a striving towards objectivity.

### 2.5.2 *The personal journalist*

To the journalists in the category of the personal journalist, 'objectivity' is something to be tweaked in accordance to the story. Shari Wiltshire, who works at *The Avis*, explains it as working 'freely' with the concept of objectivity by asking the right questions and 'manipulating' the story into adopting her point of view. This is in spite of the fact that she sees epistemological objectivity as a journalistic goal:

Your goal is to stand on the outside and to report on what is going on and just relay that information to the public in the most basic sense. I think my background in English [literature], being very analytical, [...] I can't help – and I can get away with – putting more feedback into it. Not necessarily from my own perspective, but listening to what [people are] saying and the discussions that are being made and ask the right questions to get the answers that you want to hear, you know what I mean, so you can put that in your article and then people can think what you are thinking. (Wiltshire, *The Avis*)

It is important to the *personal* journalists to have an interest and an engagement in the issues that they cover. Journalism involves things that they care about and it is constructed on the frontier of literature and journalism, like the work of the *decentring* journalists (Muhlmann 2008: 29). To Wiltshire this means that she wants to focus on groups 'that are never going anywhere' socially – the groups that are affected by the political decisions and so on. There seems to be a personal ethical attachment which is allowed space on the pages in the newspaper. The split between the interviewees'



understanding of their subjectivities and journalism, which was prominent to the *professional* journalists, is less so to the *personal* journalists. Wiltshire believes that her upbringing in St Croix and the fact that she knows the people who are affected is the reason for this commitment. Wiltshire emphasises that she believes that her lack of training in journalism helps her to be more involved and ‘less objective’. Ayesha Morris from the *The Daily News*’s St Thomas office expresses her idea of objectivity in the following:

To me, everyone has a bias. And I think to me the most important thing is to be fair. Because when you are a journalist you have the power to destroy, and you have the power to build up. [...] You can really tear down people by what you write. To me the key is to report what you see as being the fact. Report the spirit of the people as passionately as you can – without being over the top. And being truthful – as truthful as you can be. (Morris, *The Daily News*).

There are many overlaps between this statement of journalistic practice and that of the Danish journalist students’ oath, however the difference is placed significantly in the starting point of her approach, that everyone has a bias. That is, also the journalist-subject. Hereby, Morris takes difference into account and seems very aware of her particular reader. Ethical accountability, then, is for Morris both a part of the interaction and the dialogue with the readers but also a continuous evaluation of her work. Like Wiltshire, Morris feels connected to the community though she was born in mainland US to an American mother and a father from Tobago. Instead of just being an observer she sees herself as participating in many of the events that she covers, which enables her to have more sensitivity in relation to what the Virgin Islanders’ find offensive, important, or interesting.

The *personal* journalist, then, creates a starting point in her own engagement and personal life. Objectivity is more about accountability – that is, it is about being able to account for the stories published which are personal and political, to a certain extent. However, this is not about being from USVI, necessarily – though Wiltshire bases her engagement in her upbringing in the territory – but about ‘a sensitivity’ towards the readers. The *personal* journalist runs the risk of losing credibility because



she is reporting about her friends in a close-knit community. The personal and emotional engagement may not speak to all readers and so the readership becomes limited to the community which the *personal* journalist writes for and about – that is, it closes in on itself and restricts the unifying abilities and effects of journalism. However, it is an attempt at taking political and ethical responsibility within the community and for the impact of journalism. When it works, this approach taken by the journalist-subjects results in a *decentring* journalism that turns the gaze and the awareness on the readers and their community, which they hold in common with the journalist-subject. But when it fails it merely turns the ‘margin’ into the new ‘centre’ or represents a distorted ‘authenticity’ of a given community or culture.<sup>52</sup>

## 2.6 CONCLUSION

### 2.6.1 *The singular journalist-subjects and subjectivity*

The above analysis of the journalistic relations to objectivity in the USVI territory shows that the journalists’ relations and connections to the community for/about which they write differ significantly. It is additionally noteworthy that the differences are not distinctly based on gender or ethnicity, though the category of the personal journalist consisted of two women of African descent. However, while Wiltshire is local to St Croix, Morris was born and raised in the mainland US and only recently moved to the USVI. It could be readily assumed that the basis of Morris’ feeling of connectedness to the community is based in the fact that her father is from Tobago as well as the fact that she is African-American. This assumption would be supported in her work, which focuses on stories of black history and identity. It would moreover form an explanation to the question of why Morris and not Hanlon – another recently transferred mainland American – finds easy comfort and personal identification within the USVI. However, it would be jumping to conclusions because though it may be Morris’ personal interest to write for and from a particular identity, it does not explain why local journalist, Duval, chooses to focus on a professional commitment in her journalistic work. Being local to St Croix, Duval’s personal commitment would be firmly grounded in the community, nevertheless she chooses to adhere to the journalistic training of ‘objectivity’. The personal identities of the journalist-subjects then do not correspond directly to their journalistic practices. It is therefore important

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<sup>52</sup> A comparison between these statements and the products of the journalists who were interviewed for this chapter will be conducted in future work.



not to look at these two categories as a black/white relation or even a continental/VI relation. Rather it is a relation generated and developed by each journalist-subject within the multilayeredness of their experiences of the USVI. Moreover, the categories intermingle. Hanlon, for instance, finds that her decision to live in an area of St Croix where many local people live was fed by her personal desires to be at 'the heart of a community' and Wiltshire holds that 'objectivity is the goal' in journalism. The confusion between the epistemological and the ethical practice of journalism is not any easier seen from the angle of practising journalistic subjectivities. Moreover, the interdependence and mutual affectivities between the journalist-subject, their understanding of own subjectivity and the diverse community for/of which they write are explicit in the journalists' narratives.

### 2.6.2 *Final words*

I argued in this chapter that the politics of objectivity is bound up with the idea of modernity and the national state in which the concepts of rationality and equality are cornerstones. But objectivity is also an illusion that hides the journalistic subjectivity by splitting the ethical accountability and relation from journalistic training and practices. In Denmark these practices of the craft sustain the social imaginary through journalistic reiterations of white Lutheran cultural memories. The journalistic blindness to this reproduction is based in the journalistic uses of the concepts of objectivity and freedom of expression, which simultaneously is established through journalistic cultural memories and assumes a stable and unified 'us' with whose voice the journalists speak. No matter the personal positioning of the USVI journalists to their community, they all work within the practice 'in dominance' (Hall 2001). Neither the *professional* nor the *personal* journalist breaks free of the social imaginary of the western world view and local particularities, but they negotiate differently within the limits of the journalistic reproduction and encoding. The empirical ethnographic data support the conclusion that a social imaginary is sustained through repetition of journalistic cultural memories, which singular journalistic subjects need to be accountable for by acknowledging their journalistic subjectivities as not-one. This acknowledgement will be developed in the next chapter when I argue that the ethical self-other relation in journalistic subject positions always already is emphasising a cosmopolitanism from below (Gilroy 2004). That is, journalism is always already a relation and as such it helps me develop further what I set out to do



in chapter 1, namely to define the journalistic potential of creative affirmation and excess of relations. Journalism is always a relation in terms of technological connectivity, but more importantly to my argument, the journalist-subject holds the potential of always already being not-one. However, to think of journalism in these terms a shift is needed in the understanding of an 'us' that forges a view of identity redefined in terms of intensities (Braidotti 2006), an ethics of difference (de Beauvoir 1976; Braidotti 2006) and a non-reductionist understanding of the other as part of the self (Glissant 1997). My promise of a production-focused analytical approach to journalistic practice is then based in three analytical moves. First there is a shift in position in order to make apparent the journalist-subject as always embedded and always having an embodied subjectivity. Secondly, I will trace the relations of the journalistic products and subjectivities. Finally, the analyses will then emphasise the dynamics of journalistic cultural memories and how they reiterate notions of social imaginaries.

The next chapter introduces the way in which I theorise journalism as a potential cosmopolitan practice by not merely *decentring* the journalist-subject, but through deterritorialisation (Deleuze) of journalistic practice.



## CHAPTER 3:

### 3.1 SITUATING THE JOURNALISM OF (COSMOPOLITAN) RELATION

'Relationships matter'. This is the slogan of LinkedIn.com, one of the countless social and professional networks circulating on the internet at present. LinkedIn connects professionals via concentric circles expanding the participants' network of connections. This particular network site consists of over '20 million experienced professionals from around the world representing 150 industries.'<sup>53</sup> In the early days of the new millennium social and professional networks like LinkedIn have sprouted all over the internet. Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn and Ning are all variations on the same networking theme. The success of these networks makes the point that the 'native' behaviour of the internet is social and the social behaviour of internet connectivity is spread virally through invitations and personal and professional connections (Mayo and Newcomb 2008). To a certain extent theorising journalistic practice means theorising networked information flows. I focus on the journalist-subject position and subjectivity and the role of the self-other relation, which will bring me to the concept of cosmopolitanism as a 'global' human relationship. But before I delve into the theories of cosmopolitanism in connection to the journalist-subject I want to contextualise the 'globalised' networked relation of journalistic practices and other information flows on the internet. These flourishing online networks contain and share information, personal as well as political. They helped Senator Barack Obama gather unprecedented online support for his presidential campaign 2008. As he and his campaign managers embraced his Facebook friend number 1 million some time ago, other supporting networks emerged and independently developed rallies and financial support for the Senator's campaign. These events can be seen as a 'democratisation of politics' (MacAskill 2008). The Obama campaign built a network of supporters online who contributed through volunteer work, financially, and through creativeness and imagination to experiment. The campaign 'allowed such supporters to create a community' (MacAskill 2008). 'The Internet encourages a new cultural practice of resignification, something possible in the small agricultural communities of the past, but then limited to the immediate members of the group', believes Mark Poster (Poster 2006: 78-9). In community building, relationships matter online just as in 'real' life relations. The Obama

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<sup>53</sup> [http://www.linkedin.com/static?key=company\\_info&trk=hb\\_ft\\_abtli](http://www.linkedin.com/static?key=company_info&trk=hb_ft_abtli)



supporters are physically located all over the planet – from the United States, France, the UK, Denmark, Nigeria, Kenya, Venezuela, Italy etc.<sup>54</sup>, but online they constitute a community connected in their support for Senator Obama's campaign and in their democratic beliefs. In Poster's words, the internet deterritorialises exchanges (Poster 2006) in ways that the 'old' media<sup>55</sup> could not do. The internet is both worldwide and anchored in the concept of the nation-state, he argues, and this double spatial interaction affords a new political positioning, that of the *netizen*. A netizen is an online citizen who interacts politically and personally via blogs, networks, chat-rooms or other online information output. S/he can be a civic journalist, an online journalist or not a journalist at all – s/he is a citizen who functions personally and politically partly on the internet.

### 3.1.1 *The embodied netizen*

However, netizenship is only possible if the nation-state does not attempt to regulate the access and the information on the internet. Freedom of expression is pivotal to netizenship because of its democratic ideals. Poster (2006) believes national regulations of the internet to be difficult if not impossible (Poster 2006: 78). Nevertheless, this has never stopped, for instance, the Chinese government from limiting access and imposing censorship online (Li 2008).<sup>56</sup> Blogging and networking is not always a benign interaction of gathering voters for the US presidential election, but may pose physical danger to the civic journalists posting critique of national governments (Li 2008, Loewenstein 2008). Chinese bloggers may post a critical text on their blog and leave it there only for a short period of time in order not to be found out and closed down by the Chinese government. This creates a window of opportunity for readers to copy the text and send it virally throughout the internet – through personal and political networks – and in this way make many people aware of

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<sup>54</sup> <http://www.facebook.com/barackobama?ref=s> (accessed 2 July 2008).

<sup>55</sup> By 'old' media is meant TV, radio and newspapers in which the editing power belonged in the news room, and by 'new' media is meant internet and blogs etc. This distinction is problematic for several reasons, especially in light of my argument in this dissertation: That journalistic subjectivity is a networked and rhizomatic multiple relation and as such 'old' and 'new' media (ex)change each other continually. However, in order to maintain clarity I have used the distinction.

<sup>56</sup> 'Western' democracies such as Australia and the Scandinavian countries have also proposed regulation of the internet, for instance, banning access to sites containing child pornography (Loewenstein 2008). Though it may seem reasonable to limit online access to child pornography, the reasoning behind these regulations is based on paternalistic assumptions that the governments in Australia or the Scandinavian countries know what is (morally) best for their populations and that they need to be controlled, argues journalist and blogger Antony Loewenstein (2008, 2008a).



the critique levelled at the national powers (Li 2008). That is, the internet does not extract the netizen from bodily locations, as Poster suggests (Poster 2006). On the contrary, the body and its connection to geographical and political spaces is very real to many bloggers in countries such as Iran, Cuba and China (Li 2008; Loewenstein 2008), as well as to the Obama supporters who congregate physically too in order to work for a 'real'-life better North America. According to Deleuze and Guattari, our selves are relevant only through our affects and affective connections to others. Deleuze and Guattari's notion of *becoming* theorises the action of relating to others to an extent which leaves neither self nor other unchanged by the relation. It is a metamorphosis with and a *becoming* other. This means that a community online is comparable to that of a 'real' life community, because the relation is affective and networked.<sup>57</sup> 'Real'-life communities such as the nation-state may be as imagined and abstract as a 'virtual' online community (Anderson 1991, Appiah 2005), but this does not mean that embodied experience of the interaction with the other(s) online disappears. We all consist of both online and physical relations and intensities vacillating and (ex)changing all the time and therefore a strict distinction between the two is futile. What is important, in my view, is to realise the geographical as well as quantitative extent of the possible network as well as the qualitative synergy it generates. Human interaction may be forever changed in the online connection due to the technological interface, as Poster argues. Poster develops the concept of the *humachine* to deal with this always already technologically-morphed subject. Consequently, I will argue with Deleuze, Guattari and Braidotti, as I did in chapter 1, that the ethical relation needs to be theorised on an embodied and embedded subject-based level. However, *humachine* or not, the subject is still a subject constituted through his or her ever-changing and exchanging affects and relation online and offline. In my view, what the internet brings to relation is a much wider span of relation than imagined in previous technological times and a new potential of *becoming-other* in this new 'global' space.

However, this ethics of relation through which relations can be created and developed reaching across vast spaces by help of the internet does not mean that the internet

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<sup>57</sup> I will not deny that a personal relationship to family members, spouses or lovers is the same as the relationship to a politically rooted community, but the arguments and discussions about the particularities goes beyond the scope of this dissertation. For a defence of 'some form of particularity' and the ethics of cosmopolitan singular relations can be found in Appiah (2005).



equals a 'global' cosmopolitanism. 'Global' community formations in which racist, extreme-right, oppressive views are put forth are also available online. These groups are not excluded from the internet or from building communities in which they continue their hateful politics (Downing and Husband 2005). Though Chinese critics of governmental violations of the human rights may help bring the situation in Tibet to the attention of the rest of the world, many Chinese bloggers also write in favour of the Chinese rule of Tibet, as well as post videos with messages such as, 'Tibet WAS, IS and ALWAYS WILL BE a part of China'<sup>58</sup> and 'Chinese Special Armed Police Force (SPC)',<sup>59</sup> in which the 'west' is challenged by pictures of the Chinese military and the text: 'Come and get some' on YouTube online. The internet is not inherently morally 'good' or 'bad' or communist or capitalist – it is what the users make of it. It is not a Habermasian process of inevitable rational consensus nor can it be thought of in terms of over-arching cosmopolitan morality.<sup>60</sup> That is, it is formulated and continually (re)constructed through the embodied subjects of relation.

### *3.1.2 The 'global' subject-position*

As mentioned in chapter 2, academic research on journalism and globalisation has tended to focus on the technology which enables (civic) journalism to reach beyond national and cultural borders and which posits journalism as the (universal) Fourth Estate and a direct political power (Anderson and Ward 2007, Durham and Kellner 2001, Berry 2005). However, the technological developments have also forced journalistic theorists and practitioners alike to rethink the power positions within the practice. Editing power is now dispersed into a billion mobile phone users, bloggers and webmasters, and has left the dual space of private and public realms merged and intermingled. Nevertheless it is sometimes argued that the role of the media in the globalised world is overrated and that it is even a myth, though a necessary one (Hafez 2007). The national 'old' media still sit heavily on the administration and flows of newsfeeds and media consumers still prefer to watch television to finding their news online, argues Kai Hafez (2007). In effect, '[m]edia production and use are proving conservative cultural forces in many parts of the world. They are generating a reality which the "globalization" approach struggles to cope with' (Hafez 2007: 2).

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9QNKb34cJo>. (Accessed 1. Nov. 2008)

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khDrho-1A6M>. (Accessed 1. Nov. 2008)

<sup>60</sup> I will discuss Habermas' idea of the global public sphere later on in this chapter.



Indeed, in chapters 1 and 2 I argued that journalist-subjects reproduce social imaginaries through reiterations of cultural memories excluding minority groups and glossing over unrecognised multiculturalism. In this chapter I argue that globalised ethical journalism of relation should be seen as a potential for creative affirmation and excess of relation and that the concept of ‘the media’ therefore is unhelpful. Rather I argue for a return to the journalist-subject as I have theorised the position in this dissertation and thus to the inter-subjective ethical relation of power experienced through journalistic practice.

The act of building networked communities through technological developments is based in social but singular interactions and so I repeat my argument in chapter 2 for the privileged position of journalist-subjects. My point in this dissertation so far has been to reconnect ethical accountability to the journalist-subject and practice of doing journalism. This ethical relation points in a different direction from that of the theories discussing the impact of the blogosphere or CNN’s iReport and use of YouTube images. I am expanding my argument to encompass a ‘global’ setting into which I transpose the ethical self-other relation. And thus I emphasise the capacity for community building and networking in connection to the journalist-subject, journalistic subjectivity and the self-other relation discussed in the two previous chapters, not as new identity-based group formations. Journalism is always already relation – not-one. In the preceding chapters I have theorised relation as embodied and embedded experience. Embodied in way of sensory and sensuous affects and creativity, and embedded in the sense that journalistic cultural memories produce and are produced by and within the social imaginary – and inescapably so. I have argued that these relations need to be acknowledged if not completely understood by journalist-subjects if the project of developing another journalistic subjectivity is going to be successful. Moreover, the journalist-subject as not-one is networked through technology as well as through affective relations and situations into a multiple relation and position.

### *3.1.3 Becoming journalist-subject*

This chapter picks up where chapter 2 left off. I will be drawing on the categories presented and discussed in chapter 2 of the *professional* and the *personal* journalist-subject in order to connect journalist relation to theories of ‘global’ mediation and



cosmopolitanism. I will also be following up on Muhlmann's concepts of the *decentring* and the *unifying* function of journalism in the social imaginary and in the construction of journalistic cultural memories. The categories of the *personal* and the *professional* journalist show an acknowledgement of the journalistic power position; Morris' contention that 'as a journalist you have the power to destroy' and Hanlon's ideal of caring about the same things in the community due to common experience ('We all use the same roads and get annoyed about the same pot-holes!') are arguable ideas of recognition of own hegemonic power and subjugated knowledges, respectively. Both contentions, then, operate with a kind of questioning and acknowledgement of the journalistic power position. By transposing the self-other relation of the journalist-subject as not-one into the debates on cosmopolitanism I want to pursue the argument that the Deleuzian concept of *becoming-minoritarian* reworked through the work of poststructuralist feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti can help develop a kind of ethical cosmopolitan relation within journalistic practice and theory. The journalists in the USVI draw on a multiple system of identification because of the immense diversity of the islands' population and history. However, the journalists practise their writing 'in dominance' (Hall 2001). Even though Braidotti states that in order for the (white) master position to engage in the *becoming-minoritarian* s/he has to undo her or his own position – thus leading us back to the notion of resistance – it is nevertheless a concept, which moves in rhizomatic formations and therefore escapes the binary positions of hegemony and resistance. That is, the concept of *becoming-minoritarian* avoids the identity-politics and deterministic tendencies in the Marxist-inspired readings of power relations by staying in a process of embodied *detrterritorialisation* and of *becoming-other* or *minoritarian*. As will become apparent on the next pages, I take up the path from chapter 1 through phenomenology and poststructuralist philosophers' theorising about the power of the social imaginary and resistance to it and in relation to ethical connections to the other. My point is that with the concept of *becoming-other* or *minoritarian* I am allowed a reworking of political and social activism embedded in the hegemonic position of the social imaginary as well as informed by other poststructuralist philosophers than Deleuze, Guattari and Braidotti. In this chapter I therefore hope to show that theorising journalism through *becoming-minoritarian* enables a journalistic practice and theory in a cosmopolitan and detrterritorialised



scope, while taking into account the role of power as multilayered. I will return to this in more explicit forms later in this chapter.

### 3.2 COSMOPOLITAN GLOBALISATION

As already introduced, my emphasis on the ethical relation and my argument for the privileged position of the multiple journalist-subject bring me immediately to the concept of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism theorises global moral relations and communities in different versions. It is, moreover, an interesting concept in connection to journalism because of its disciplinary and theoretical span. It is both used in governmental studies (Held and McGrew 2003) and in sociological and philosophical contemplations and analyses (Derrida 2001, Gilroy 2004, Douzinas 2007). Thus, it can be seen to implicate two diverse functions of journalism too; the political watchdog and the social function of communication and information.

In what follows I discuss the concept of cosmopolitanism in relation to the journalist-subject and the ethnographic findings which I presented in chapter 2. I concluded in chapter 2 that the journalists from the USVI did not break free of the social imaginary of the western world view and local particularities, though they continually negotiate their positions within the limits of the journalistic reproduction and encoding. A social imaginary is sustained through repetition of journalistic cultural memories, for which singular journalist-subjects need to be accountable by acknowledging their journalistic subjectivities as not-one, I argued. I will refer to these conclusions throughout this chapter and relate them to the discussion of the concept of cosmopolitanism.

#### *3.2.1 Cosmopolitanism*

I will begin by asserting that there are many cosmopolitanisms. In the past ten to fifteen years, revival of the term has presented scholars with a number of definitions. Examples are theories developed by Peter van der Veer (2001) in connection with transnational religious movements as a sort of cosmopolitanism. Van der Veer argues that the concept's historical connection to the nation-state and colonialism is outdated and that the religious and diasporic structures of the globalised world today may constitute a new way of theorising cosmopolitan connections. I will return to a couple of other theories shortly. But even earlier on – in the Enlightenment forerunner to today's concept – there was no consensus as to what defined cosmopolitanism or a



cosmopolitan.<sup>61</sup> Broadly speaking the concept can be divided into a *normative* version and an *analytical* version. Normative cosmopolitanism includes versions discussed in governmental and political theory as well as in sociology and other social sciences.<sup>62</sup> Analytical cosmopolitanism has much in common with poststructuralist philosophical thinking and is popular within cultural studies and interdisciplinary studies and the like. I shall return to the analytical cosmopolitan project shortly, after a brief introduction of the concept of normative cosmopolitanism and a short outline of Jürgen Habermas's theory of the *public sphere* in the cosmopolitan setting so as to bring the discussion to relate to doing journalism and to journalistic theory and practice simultaneously.

Habermas may not be the most prominent and referenced scholar on cosmopolitanism. For this position Ulrich Beck comes to mind. However, though Beck is often referred to in cosmopolitan discussions, his theories deal largely with normative and governmental cosmopolitanism – that is, with ideas of global governance and a cosmopolitan Europe (Beck 2007). For the purpose of this chapter, focusing on communication and journalistic subjectivity, I will be dealing with approaches to cosmopolitanism which place emphasis on journalistic discourse, human empathy and solidarity and social imaginaries. In terms of theorising the normative cosmopolitanism in relation to the mediated and communicative reality, Habermas is fundamental to normative cosmopolitan thinking.

### 3.2.2 Normative cosmopolitanism

Normative cosmopolitanism builds on a notion of globalisation as a fact and the responsibilities of governments, especially northern and western governments, and global organisations to exhibit humanitarianism by helping less fortunate nations and by redistribution of wealth. As relayed above, within normative cosmopolitanism there are many disagreements as to how to practice the preaching and indeed if it is possible at all. David Held, among others, has called these differences for *thin* and *thick* cosmopolitanism. Thin cosmopolitanism refers to a more cultural approach

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<sup>61</sup> Thank you to Rebecka Letteval and her insightful paper presented at the symposium 'Cosmopolitanism and the Media', held at Swedish National Defence College, Stockholm, April 12-13, 2007.

<sup>62</sup> This should of course not be understood as a fixed disciplinary division, but as a preliminary categorisation. I will develop the specifics in the following.



encompassing sociological projects of difference and critiques of globalisation (Waldron 1992, Scheffler 2002). The thick version is normatively strong and stands for a political project of global governance (Beck 2002, Held 2003).

Historically cosmopolitanism is traditionally seen as having developed in three eras (Held 2003). First, the Stoics saw themselves as cosmopolitans in a universally moral vein, which placed human beings in a moral relationship to each other as fellow human beings first and foremost. Secondly, Immanuel Kant used the concept as a vantage point to criticise civil society. Cheah (2006) argues that Kant's notion of cosmopolitanism can be seen as interchangeable with his notion of hospitality – that it is every person's right to not be treated with hostility by others. However, Kant's notion of cosmopolitanism is highly bound up with the idea of connections between sovereign nations and does not encompass an option of citizenship in the sense of a right to settle anywhere in the world (Cheah 2006). Derrida also points to that very dilemma at the root of the concept, as I shall discuss under the heading of analytical cosmopolitanism. The third era of cosmopolitanism is recent and goes beyond the nation-states in as much as the emphasis is on the individual human being's moral relation to other human beings. It is the 'principle of individualist moral egalitarianism' (Held 2003: 310-11). Moreover, this idea of cosmopolitanism 'emphasizes that the status of equal worth should be acknowledged by everyone' through 'reciprocal recognition' (Held 2003: 311). It is emblematic of the ideas of normative cosmopolitanism that it is followed up by an institutional structure to support and sustain it. Political systems and states are therefore important to this kind of cosmopolitanism and are seen as possible 'vehicles to aid the delivery of effective public regulation, equal liberty and social justice' (Held 2008: 164) along with other political agents and forces.

Immediately, however, there are two issues which need addressing in this notion of normative cosmopolitanism. Firstly, it would seem that the principle of egalitarian individualism is assumed always already to be desirable to all of the world's citizens. How else would it function? This kind of cosmopolitanism does not take into account the one person or group of persons, the states or religions, who do not subscribe to this world view and who would not take part in reciprocal recognition, and because of this it assumes a liberal individual subject. Reciprocal relations are, for instance, not



required as moral objectives by thinkers such as Derrida, who believes that hospitality, justice and forgiveness can only be given when it is not received as such and so not returned. Simone de Beauvoir's use of the term reciprocity encompassed the assumption of asymmetrical power relations between subjects and thus not a similar or assimilated reciprocal exchange. The idea of egalitarian individualism already implicitly assumes a preferred and thus more highly valued conceptualisation of the individual. Secondly, and related, it would seem obvious that the political interactions between today's nations do not always correspond according to ideas of mutual recognition of equal worth – the never-ending parades of wars, conquests and genocides attest all too vividly to this. It is thus a concept which is impossible to realise. Cosmopolitanism on these terms seems too easily to slide towards imperialism and the quest to 'liberate' 'illiberal' nations in the name of democracy (Douzinas 2007) and journalism follows as political propaganda.

Philosopher and political theorist Jürgen Habermas knows very well that much of (what I call) normative cosmopolitanism does not find itself represented in the real world of politics and interactions. He theorises instead an 'ideal speech situation' (Borradori 2003) to guide what he sees as the unfinished project of modernity. In Borradori's (2003) interview with Habermas, she asserts that in contrast with Kant's notion of *the public sphere*, which is characterised by its emphasis on the solitary 'I', Habermas insists on the plural 'we'. The public sphere in this conception is a dialogical space functioning through rational argumentation. Habermas's public sphere is founded through this inter-subjective interest and involvement. Combined with the possibility of rationally justified consensus, Habermas argues for communicative action framed in the public sphere of dialogical interaction in which individual moral principles and beliefs emerge in response to a community of fellow speakers (Borradori 2003). The validity of an opinion as well as moral norms is guaranteed through rational argumentation and the ruling structure of this community is based on the strength of these arguments. Habermas believes in our natural ability to seek rational solutions in the event of disagreements. The fact that in Habermas's conception of the public sphere there is more than one speaker, 'propel[s] us to seek rational solutions that will be evident to everyone who is not under the spell of manipulation or distortion' (Borradori 2003: 62). In this way validated 'universal' consensus can – and will – be reached, Habermas argues. In the introduction to this



chapter I have already questioned the stance of Habermas when I contended that the networked and social information flow on the internet, for instance, allows equally racist communities as well as sites for human rights organisations to flourish. It cannot be assumed that ‘rational’ thinking or consensus will prevail, because the internet as well as other mediated networks of cosmopolitan potential is social – founded in social communities in which difference is not always readily accepted.

Habermas’s cosmopolitanism rests on the idea of the world being constituted through this sphere of communicative action, which could be one of the reasons why the link with journalism and media analyses is so tight. In light of the previous two chapters, however, two objections cannot be overlooked. Firstly, the one-dimensional vision of rational non-emotional communication does not recognise the politics of perception or the power of embodied experience which informs human interaction. Secondly, Habermas’ insistence upon reciprocal power relations seems outdated. Reciprocity, for one, limits the interaction to a dual relation. As the introduction above clearly states, today’s relations are always already multiple. Nevertheless, Habermas goes on, power relations between nation-states and international relations are not helpful if we want to avoid manipulation and distortion (Borradori 2003). Thus it is not only theoretical obstacles that Habermas sees in the way of reaching a cosmopolitan consensus of rationally validated agreements. Practical challenges present themselves in the disrespect shown to international forces such as the UN, Habermas asserts in the interview with Borradori (2003: 39-40). Clearly, the cosmopolitan community based on this version of the Habermasian public sphere (Habermas 2001) creates the media – defined as a technologically mediated information flow – in a pivotal and powerful role. The media in this conception is in the powerful position to manipulate and distort information leading to reciprocal mistrust and breakdown in communication, but as many journalists see it the media could also take the honourable place as ‘watchdog’ of the rational argument and advance democracy and liberation. All the same, the media in the Habermasian conception remains a macro-structural entity unattached to sensory and embodied experiences and subjectivities.

The blogosphere and social networks present yet another aspect of the struggle for a global public sphere. Normative cosmopolitanism and Habermas’ public sphere do not tell the whole story when it comes to doing journalism and mediating between



people, cultures and distant parts of the world. My project differs from that of normative cosmopolitanism. In comparison with what I would like to assert, normative cosmopolitanism leaves little room for ambivalences and embodied contingencies, because of its dependence on political structures and the idea of rational argumentation. In chapter 2 I introduced de Beauvoir's ethics of ambiguity, which states that the freedom of the subject is contingent on the freedom of the other. In order to achieve freedom the subject has to will the freedom of the other. Coupling this idea with Braidotti's notion of the subject as not-one ethical self-other relation is thought of in terms of singular relations that are always already implicated with the other. I want to allow for this constantly re-negotiating relation of the journalist-subject rather than basing journalistic relation to the other on rationality alone. The embodied and embedded notion of relation I am arguing for in this dissertation rests on an assumption of the importance of experience and sensuous sensibilities as a major component in social and cultural as well as political lives. As in the earlier discussion of the concept of journalistic objectivity and the role of journalism in democratic processes, normative cosmopolitanism seems to transcend the individuals' cultural, religious, ethnic, gendered, physical ability and many other layers of personal experience of the world and others. Politics is presented almost purely on a macro-level of global governance and military oppression and resistance. However, real life journalistic practice seems to have room for negotiation when it comes to the universality of 'objectivity'. The USVI journalists in the category of the *professional* journalist did not see the concept of 'objectivity' as the universal aspect of journalism, but rather the structural practice and craftsmanship – the journalistic training – that leads to 'objectivity' or 'fairness' in reporting was seen as that which would vouch for the applicability of journalistic practice in all contexts. My project here continues to be a return of the ethical accountability of the situated self-other relation in journalistic practice to a journalistic subjectivity. Normative cosmopolitanism cannot sustain this relation because of its emphasis on institutional power and global governance. In a crude comparison, Habermas' public sphere relies on the so-called 'old' media (defined in note 55 above) alone and a journalism with strong *unifying* powers, whereas the aim of *decentring* journalistic practice in personal ways (in terms of ethnic and gendered differences) and practical ways (in terms of technological changes and developments) is already challenging this assumed reciprocal ideal and the relation of hegemony versus resistance. If I was to develop an approach to



journalistic practice based on journalism's institutional power and importance for political decision-making and with an emphasis on journalism as the fourth estate the normative cosmopolitanism would be highly relevant. However, as I have made clear in the preceding chapters, my focus is on the journalist-subject and therefore I need to turn my attention to *analytical cosmopolitanism*.

Analytical cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, aims at moving beyond the political project of a global governance structure and so leaves room for theorising about the power relations beyond resistance and hegemony or political governance. I will proceed to discuss versions of analytical cosmopolitanism with an emphasis on the work by Jacques Derrida.

### 3.2.3 *Analytical cosmopolitanism*

Analytical cosmopolitanism does not see universal connectivity as the end goal to which we progress. In the philosophical tradition, Jacques Derrida (2001), also building on Kant as well as Levinas, has been influential. Derrida moves beyond legislative and regulating law and points towards 'democracy to come' as a model for the (always) future. Democracy to come is a central concept in Derrida's thinking as it is the ideal of justice, forgiveness, hospitality and so on. Cosmopolitanism is to Derrida 'conditional hospitality' (Borradori 2003), whereas the ideal hospitality is to come. That is, Derrida theorises a space of continuous negotiation, '*difference*', between the conditional (law, hospitality, forgiveness) and the unconditional and unattainable (law, hospitality, forgiveness). Derrida thus rejects the term cosmopolitanism on the grounds that conditional laws of tolerance, which Derrida posits in contrast to hospitality, sustain it. Tolerance is a form of Christian charity and is fraught with conditions, he argues (Derrida 2001).<sup>63</sup> Expressed differently, you only tolerate something you find contestable and consequently you pose conditions for your act of tolerance. Derrida's use of the concept of hospitality is not a counter-Kantian or counter-Enlightenment argument, Borradori (2003) argues. On the contrary, he directs attention to the historical and cultural limits of apparently neutral concepts of the Enlightenment tradition in order to expand and update the concepts. *Going beyond* something is not the same as *leaving it behind* to Derrida, but rather a

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<sup>63</sup> I will return to the discussion on tolerance when analysing case study 3.



deconstruction in contrast to a destruction. Hospitality is the gift of future – of time (Grosz 2005) and it is unconditional.<sup>64</sup> In particular, Derrida uses the term ‘unconditional hospitality’. Thus, Derrida theorises the meeting with the (global) other in different terms than the governmental approach. Rather than reworking the relation between the self and the other, he questions the conditions for this relation. This is his poststructural move.

In *On Cosmopolitanism* (Derrida 2001), Derrida writes about ‘the cities of refuge’ as a figuration for a connectivity through which unconditional hospitality can be practised (Derrida 2001: 23). Derrida imagines the cities as places of refuge as well as of reflection. As I read Derrida here, he is not necessarily speaking of actual cities of people, buildings and streets, but of spaces of living/being with others. I read Derrida as speaking of non-physical communities. It is an ‘experience of cities of refuge’ he is referring to – and idea, an ideal, that is hospitality (Derrida 2001: 23). Regulatory justice or hospitality will always come about through a division, a fleshing out of what falls within and what falls outside of the law, and thus law will never reach the potential of hospitality but will have to work through the categorisation of tolerance. This is, according to Borradori (2003), Derrida’s intervention on Kant’s cosmopolitanism: Derrida asserts that a cosmopolitan politics is a constant negotiation between the law of unconditional hospitality and the conditional laws of rights to hospitality. The law of unconditional hospitality is seemingly immovable and an unchanging ideal, which the conditional laws of rights to hospitality can never achieve though it must always strive towards achieving it, Derrida argues. This may sound close to what Simon Critchley (2007) calls *the infinite demand of the other* – but I will return to this shortly.

What Derrida is proposing is a new ethics or new *cosmopolitics* of the cities of refuge (Derrida 2001: 5), which I have already suggested to be a reflective space – *differance* – of relating to the other. This new ethics is hospitality, Derrida writes (2001: 17). The cities of refuge relate to each other through forms of solidarity yet to be invented (Derrida 2001: 4). Rather than cosmopolitanism, Derrida thus believes in another

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<sup>64</sup> The notion of the gift opens up a whole new set of Derridean ideas where the gift is only that which is not received as such. A discussion of this and related concepts goes beyond (but does not leave behind) the scope of this chapter.



connectivity, which blurs the boundaries of structural global institutionalised solidarity of reciprocity. It is the ethics of cities of refuge, spaces of reflection and a new order of law and democracy to come (Derrida 2001: 23). This new ethics or *cosmopolitics* speaks to the subject or smaller communities rather than multi-national corporations. Thinking of the Derridean cosmopolitics or cosmoethics alongside the USVI journalists' practices, it urges them to begin their investigations from the other and to recognise the asymmetrical relationship as a power structure of the relation to the other. I see this as running close to USVI journalist Morris' quote in the empirical study presented in chapter 2, in which she acknowledges the power of journalism and the need for accountability. Derrida's thoughts, then, lay the groundwork – or the first breaking-apart – of another global journalistic ethics. In this view journalistic practice functions as obligations without rights as a form of hospitality (Silverstone 2007). 'Effective speech entails a view of action as establishing connectivities between people and forging relationships of responsibility and commitment with the "other" without asking for reciprocity or control over the outcome of action' (Chouliaraki 2006: 201). Particular mediating acts may forge more or less empathy from the viewer and so direct the viewer into a controlled empathetic spectatorship of suffering (Chouliaraki 2006). This approach, however, assumes that communities of connections are somehow able to stay morally detached and impartial, and is questioned by the character of the embodied subject which I am theorising.

British philosopher Simon Critchley's theories of the ethical and infinite demand of the other attach a creative production to the ethical relation. Though Critchley (2007) pays little notice to the concept of cosmopolitanism in *Infinitely Demanding – Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance* (2007) his aim is to think a new ethics in which the relation to the other is paramount and in which that relation is built on hetero-affectivity understood as an ever-asymmetrical relation to the other. The demand (which is approved by the subject and creates the ethical subject) is unfulfillable and divides subjectivity. Therefore, Critchley argues, we deal with it through sublimation. This sublimation should be enacted through humour and self-irony, which is an alternative version of the Freudian super-ego. In order to avoid self-loathing and masochism under the weight of unfulfillable demands, humour should be chosen as a mode of sublimation. However, Critchley believes in 'true democracy' which – inspired by Marx – is 'a movement of democratization that is – dialectically expressed



– the truth of the state, a truth that no state incarnates’ (Critchley 2007: 115). The idea of ‘true democracy’ is what I find to run along the lines of Derrida’s ‘democracy-to-come’ in that they both not only deal with an ideal situation but also think democracy as a dialectical process of (Derridean) *differance* or (Critchley’s) distance to the state within the state (Critchley 2007: 113). With these concepts of a movement of democratisation and humour expressing resistance, Critchley opts for non-violent activism such as creative and humorous happenings and demonstrations in connection to political meetings etc., dislocation and distance to/within the state in relation to political struggles. Due to the mobility – both physical and topically – of the journalistic practice, this makes the journalist-subject an ideal figuration and testing-ground for cosmopolitan, subliminal activism shot through with the previously theorised creative production (see chapter 2). Journalist-subjects hold the potential of being distant from the state within the state and to productively create attention around the other political events. Journalism, thus, coupled with Critchley’s theories makes for an attempted *decentring* journalism.

#### 3.2.4 Social cosmopolitanism

The *decentring* mode becomes even more distinct in Paul Gilroy’s theories on the subject. Social theorist and scholar in black history Paul Gilroy (2004) places emphasis on activism in his version of cosmopolitanism, which may be argued to turn the concept upside-down. As I discussed in chapter 1, critical race and whiteness theories have developed substantial critique of universal morality functioning as ‘the white man’s burden’ during the heights of colonial expansion. The tradition, to which Gilroy’s work on the black slave trade and forced population displacement across the Atlantic has been pivotal, is carried by a critique of the European-centred point of view of researchers, scholars and lay-people alike. As reviewed in the section on normative cosmopolitanism, this viewpoint, which posits a certain value hierarchy among different civilisations, is also active in the concept of cosmopolitanism. This is why, for a scholar like Gilroy, it is crucial to flip the concept upside-down in order to keep the critique of universal, Eurocentric paradigms. Rather than top-down cosmopolitanism, Gilroy’s is a ‘cosmopolitanism from below’ (Gilroy 2004).

Thus, Gilroy (2004) aims at developing, what he sees as an alternative to cosmopolitanism based on grass-roots solidarity and activism. Gilroy’s concept of



cosmopolitanism from below is constituted of two main ideas, a rejection of the temporality imposed on people of different cultures, which understands some cultures as more mature than others and thus posits them in a teleological relationship also theorised in Goldberg's (2002) concept of historicism and very evident in the Danish political and cultural discourse – as referred to in chapters 1, 2 and to come. Gilroy argues for a synchronising of cultures 'in order to fus[e]...horizons so that the possibility of a common future becomes conceivable' (Gilroy 2004: 74). A way of fusing, Gilroy suggests, is through the second and in this context more important concept constituting his cosmopolitanism from below, 'estrangement'. Estrangement begs disloyalty to one's own culture and local civilisation through actual movement. One needs to leave the comfort zone of one's home and engage in activism that uses the privilege and entitlement, which one carries by virtue of being white and/or 'western' and make use of this privilege to help those who do not possess these privileges. It is not to be confused with the idea of treason to whiteness, as argued by Noel Ignatiev and the people behind *Race Traitor* magazine (Ignatiev 1997). Rather than an obstruction and giving up of privileges, Gilroy's estrangement is an affirmative sharing of privileges – it is a physical and mental placement of oneself in the place of the other, for instance, as human shields in the Gaza strip. That is, it is a shift of consciousness as well as of location.

However, replacement of one (self) for the other is not a solution, Elaine Scarry argues. Scarry (1996) believes the difficulty of imagining other people to be impossible. This is because the human capacity to hurt each other is always greater than the capacity to imagine the other, Scarry argues: '*the human capacity to injure other people is very great because our capacity to imagine other people is very small*' (Scarry 1996: 103, italics in original). That is, it is difficult to share pain experienced by another. Because of this poor human capacity for imagining the other and transferring experiences Scarry suggests that we instead attempt to imagine ourselves less. That is, instead of trying to see the other in a way that is comparable to the way we see ourselves, we should instead adopt a strategy by which we 'unimagine' ourselves. This rather negative proposal, moreover, assumes that one can step outside one's social imaginary and understand oneself and others from an 'uncontaminated' position, and the suggestion cannot stand alone. Despite their differences, it could be said that Bauman's (1991) notion of distancing oneself from one's culture poses a



similar conundrum – that is, the conundrum of detaching oneself from one's culture or indeed from oneself. Additionally, Scarry follows Bertrand Russell and John Rawls and suggests that we should learn to imagine the other by attaching certain signifiers to the other which we automatically attach to ourselves in order to apply 'generous imaginings' (Scarry 1996: 106). This is an act of imagining the other which we have already established as a hard act to follow. Still, Scarry asserts, this is 'a cosmopolitan practice of the imagination' (Scarry 1996: 108) and as such it must be constitutionally safeguarded and Scarry underlines that a structure of sentiments is not enough.

I would say that what Scarry calls cosmopolitan is imagining the other as oneself or putting the other in one's own shoes. Either way it is a reduction of the other in an attempt to fully comprehend the other. I argue that giving up this idea of consuming the other by reducing him or her to something graspable would allow space for a poetic of relation (Glissant 1997) or 'conviviality' (Gilroy 2004). Scarry's approach does not change much in the power relation and the value placed on the self and the other respectively, that is, the self is still the ideal to which the other may progress through the imagination of the self. What Gilroy calls cosmopolitan, on the other hand – and what I would like to follow and develop – is imagining oneself as the other or indeed placing oneself in the shoes of the other. This is not meant as a metaphor, but to Gilroy it is a very real act, as well as an ethical and epistemic change of mind. It is a question of experiencing the other rather than merely knowing or understanding the other fully. However, in this constellation the other is valued more highly and possesses a privileged position. The notion exchanges the value attached to the two components, but does it break apart the binary – dichotomous – power relation or simply reverse it? It could easily be argued that Gilroy's estrangement simply re-establishes a new centre of enunciation and fails to stay in a *decentring* mode. Moreover, although Gilroy's idea of cosmopolitanism from below seems immediately applicable to a journalistic war correspondent's work in the Gaza strip or in Darfur, it does not take into account the dangers it poses or the realities of journalistic media-mogul power structures. It may be a version of cosmopolitanism, which can be practised by CNN's Christiane Amanpour, but to most journalists it remains an unreachable ideal. The western political and economic interests involved in global conflicts will always pose the journalistic risk of providing 'the normative gloss of globalized capitalism and its imperial stage' (Douzinas 2007: 176). Political theorist



Costas Douzinas therefore also opts for an explicit emphasis on political resistance. It should moreover be noted, as I did in chapter 2, that journalism's cultural and political power is not only operational in journalism based on catastrophic events, but it also functions in 'soft' news as strong identity affirmations. As in the case of Gilroy's cosmopolitanism from below, I believe the embodied solidarity which is proposed above must be coupled with a less physical and more multiple ethics in order to take place. I will return to this shortly.

### *3.2.5 Cosmopolitanism's final word*

Despite the wide-ranging implementations of the concept of cosmopolitanism it would seem that the normative version is inadequate when it comes to theorising journalism. However, if the theories are discussed through the practice as it is presented by the USVI journalists it becomes a version of journalism which is prevalent in 'western' democracies. Normative cosmopolitanism when related to journalism neglects to think through the power structures implicit in the concept, which easily lends journalism to an imperial project, as in the case of some of the work done by embedded war reporters during the two Gulf Wars.<sup>65</sup> That is, journalistic cooperation in global conflicts like the 'War on Terror' can be illuminating and instructive to the receivers of news, but it can also distort the experiences of war if the inherent power positions that follow from the individual journalists' reasons for being embedded are not apparent and if the journalists' economical, religious, social, cultural-political and other assumptions are not questioned. It is therefore important, if one holds this version of authoritative journalism dear, to keep Hanlon's caveat in mind, that journalists can be fooled. Even so, I would add, journalists need to know their stance – their biases – on the issues they cover in order to become aware of the limits they carry so as not to be fooled by persuasive arguments from the sources. A shift from merely journalist-subjects to journalistic subjectivity is needed.

The concept of cosmopolitanism operates with an implicit universal morality, which in my view constitutes a process counter-intuitive to the possibilities of

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<sup>65</sup> Kelly Oliver (2007) writes that the idea of embedded journalists in combat situations was conceived partly because of the dangers posed to the war-reporters and photographers, and partly because of the increased governmental control of the media. That is, in order to get a story, journalists today to a large extent have to be embedded somehow (Oliver 2007: 79-81).



cosmopolitanism because it deprives the concept of an empirical basis. That is, the universal moral claim overlooks the ethical self-other relation and the singular instance of connectivity it represents. There are, however, as discussed above, philosophers and sociologists who connect cosmopolitanism to face-to-face connections between people. Gilroy and Douzinas and, in his own way, Derrida explicitly aim at reworking the term and concept, holding on to its connecting potential while discarding the moralistic tendencies. Critchley rejects the term, but nevertheless comes close to Gilroy's use of the term in his attempt at formulating an ethics of commitment in combination with a politics of resistance. The philosophical approaches to cosmopolitanism rehearsed above see the concept as a distancing of oneself from the centre – be it physically, philosophically or politically – and simultaneously recognising the other in the constitution of oneself through the demand which makes up the ethical subject. Alternatively, the other way around, the demand made on the self by the other propels the self into action and to take distance from the self. Thus, the ethical moment forces the self to recognise the split subjectivity of the self (Critchley 2007) and the undoing of the self by the other (Butler 2004). The demand can be mediated through journalistic production in a more or less direct and persuasive way (Chouliaraki 2006) – that is, in Critchley's terminology, in ways that are more or less easy to approve of. However, the questions of how to avoid dichotomous relations and how the approval should occur in the face of economical and political risks and losses are still unanswered. What would make subjects give up privileges in favour of a stranger's well-being? The philosophical ideals pose the constant question of how activation of empathy occurs. In chapter 1 I discussed Simone de Beauvoir's ethics of ambiguity. To de Beauvoir, the ethical relation goes through the concept of freedom and the understanding that my freedom is determined by freedom of the other. I brought this idea to bear on Braidotti's figuration of the nomadic subject that stands for accountability and embodied subjectivity of not-one. The point here, I argued, is not to know the other but to allow for 'opaqueness' in the relation to the other (Glissant 1997) in order not to reduce the other to the self. This, I argued in chapters 1 and 2, constitutes an affirmative ethics theorised through creativity of mind and imagination.

In relation to my theorisation on the journalist-subject, the philosophical, analytical and social approach to cosmopolitan ethical relations adds a potential situatedness to



the already discussed concept of *decentring* journalism. Whereas *decentring* journalism runs the risk of creating another centre and periphery and losing its destabilising function, the cosmopolitan journalist-subject may ground him- or herself in a non-reductionist acknowledgement of the other. I will develop this statement below.

### 3.3 DOING JOURNALISM DIFFERENTLY

In chapter 2 I discussed how much of the journalistic knowledge produced in Denmark relating to minorities (as well as other news) reverberates from a white Lutheran ‘master’ position, from the position of the ‘self-identical, unmarked, disembodied, unmediated...’ (Haraway 1991: 193). The solutions proposed in ways of thinking further about the journalistic role and relation to the other in a globalised world present us with ideas of cosmopolitanism as an overarching and governmental attitude as well as an approach going beyond the political and emphasising the ethical. However, in order to give up the illusion of the unmarked, disembodied, and unmediated carrier of truth, which is implied in the fundamental journalistic concepts of objectivity and freedom of speech and which journalism shares with particular forms of cosmopolitanism, some groundedness is needed. Critchley and Gilroy emphasised such groundedness through political activism. In relation to the journalistic sphere the call for groundedness is not merely a call for the journalistic genre of Public Journalism in which the journalist is physically and socially living and working among the public about whom he or she writes. Rather it is a call for an ethical and ontological groundedness of embodied experience and body-based subjectivities. For the USVI journalists, my questions to them about their thoughts on relations between themselves and the community about and for which they are writing often spurred on a lot of ideas and thought activity. The questions provoked further thinking on the part of the journalists, both *professional* and *personal*. But the call for embodiedness and embeddedness goes beyond thinking and imagining and thus it holds the potential of becoming a methodological as well as an ethical experiment.

The discussions on cosmopolitanism in connection to journalistic practice have shown that *decentring* journalism is not enough, because of the risk of re-establishing a centre and the danger of representing false ‘authenticity’. Thus, grounding is needed in a networked reality of the media-scape. Networking applies a multilayered



dimension to journalistic practice in the shape of diversified editorial power positions and technological advancements. However, networking is not enough either, because it is merely a shift in power relations from the editorial power of the newsrooms to the dispersed power relations of the blogosphere, while power itself remains unquestioned. The concept of subjectivity as a process of becoming opens up a space of rethinking the power of the journalist-subject. In order to think of an experiment of (ex)change I want to argue for a shift in subjectivities, using Braidotti's Deleuzian vocabulary, to a *becoming-minoritarian* or *becoming-other*. The distinction runs along qualitative lines of thinking (Braidotti 2006). It is a concept that falls between Gilroy's embodied activism (though it can be that too) and Derrida's ideal of unconditional hospitality (though this ideal is not excluded from the theory of becoming). *Becoming-minoritarian* or *other* rests on a subject, who is 'widening the gap between oneself and the norm' (Patton 2000: 7). It is moreover 'the invention of new forms of subjectivity and new forms of connections between deterritorialised elements of the social field' (Patton 2000: 7-8). Thus, the concept is dealing with the proximate other that presents a possibility of connecting to distant others without assuming proximity or sameness (Ahmed 2006, Chouliaraki 2006). This places the ethical 'burden' on the journalist-subjects themselves to change from within their personal and professional practices and thus establish the conditions for a different mode of ethical interaction with others. The focus is on the structures of subjectivity as a technology of the self (Foucault 1982) and hence also the self-other relations.

### 3.3.1 *Doing journalism with Deleuze*

There are two modes in which I wish to engage with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *becoming*, which I theorise in relation to cosmopolitanism. The first is that I want to suggest the terminology and concept of 'deterritorialisation' rather than 'globalisation'. I think this shift emphasises the network or rhizomatic formation of subjectivities and inter-subjectivities. The concept of deterritorialisation in combination with becoming-minoritarian also achieves a re-negotiation of the master-position in a journalistic practice which is more *becoming-normative* (!) than *becoming-minoritarian*. It is the recurring question of not re-establishing or reterritorialising the relation to the other. According to Braidotti (2002, 2006) becoming-minoritarian is a very concrete practice, which draws on experience of exclusion or marginalisation. 'It is [moreover] important to see the limitations of the



knowledge that comes from experience and not be confined to its authority' (Braidotti 2006: 133). It is not the perspective of a physical and political minority alone. This perspective would ignore the power of the social imaginary and of the media moguls, which regulate the entries to a successful career in journalism (Gill 2007). It is rather a constant questioning, which does not require or acquire answers and in this sense it can be compared to some of Derrida's work on *différance* and Gilroy's 'estrangement'. By extension this means that what empirical experience cannot supply, can be supplemented by learning efforts, consciousness-raising or knowledge practices (Braidotti 2006). It is thus a phenomenologically inspired theory. Additionally, having been trained in the journalistic tradition of being the Fourth Estate and guardian of the modern nation-state and (un-reflected) freedom of speech, white Danish journalists – and their white, western colleagues – may have a hard time finding close at hand a referent of excluded subjectivity to identify with. In chapter 2 I referred briefly to a report from the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (2002) which states that the representation of ethnic minorities in the Danish journalistic workforce is scarce. Although some who are empirically the descendants of post-colonial subjects do live and work as journalists in Denmark as well, the power of the journalistic tradition of universal objectivity is pervasive and in order to enter the media job market some concessions have to be made (Gill 2007). The empirical and experiencing other is therefore more likely to conform to the media and journalistic norm than to change it.

However, although for the journalists in the USVI the diversity of the community and the racial history and present of the society is ready-at-hand, this is no guarantee for reflexivity. It is a singular practice in relation to others, undetermined by the community in which it is practised but always already affected by and embedded in it. Deleuze and Guattari write that the minority may – but only as a possibility – have an advantaged position in the process of *becomings*. Thus it is not about the quantity of women, ethnic and religious minorities, but the quality of relations to others. The only way the majority position can become minoritarian or other is by 'undoing its central position altogether' (Braidotti 2002: 84) and that may be attempted through a recognition of the non-unity and the rhizomic connectedness of journalistic subjects. In order to avoid re-establishing a centre the idea of a centre must be deconstructed.



Similarly, to the call for breaking up or out of the unitary journalistic subject, I further propose a methodological break. Deleuze and Guattari write: 'Expression must break forms, encourage ruptures and new sproutings. When a form is broken, one must reconstruct the content that will necessarily be part of a rupture in the order of things.' (Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 28). This suggests an inseparability of content and expression. Journalism may be expressed in new forms which will help recognise the minor elements as well as propel the reader/viewer/listener into thinking, speaking, listening, and acting (Silverstone 2007). The aim of this journalistic method is then not communication alone, but to initiate, stimulate and provoke thought through which ruptures and change occur to create a community with ethical obligations. What the theory of *becomings* is offering is a deterritorialised, political and collective-through-ethical-connections theory, which avoids the generalising universal morality. Thinking through this suggestion of a new journalistic method with the Deleuzian concept of singular memory introduced and developed in chapter 2, journalistic subjectivity and method will be able to emphasise creative production and personal sensory affects. Singular memory theorises memory as a creative and productive notion of desire, which presupposes a future because it deals with the creative force of *production* in repetition in terms of *difference* (producing difference in repetition). Deterritorialising journalistic subjectivity, which is thought of through singular memory in both spatial and temporal terms, moreover breaks apart the unitary notion of resistance in binary relation to hegemony, because it breaks with the geo-political schema of 'western' hegemony. Resistance and hegemony is no longer attached to class, racial, ethnic-national, or gendered identities, but can be challenged on the inter-subjective and singular level. That is, through cosmopolitanism from in-between in ways of creative production of memory and imagination as well as from below (Gilroy 2004). The breaking down of class, racial, ethnic-national, or gendered identities does not mean that they no longer hold significance – only that they are multiplied and made more complex.

### 3.3.2 Cosmo-journalism

The second way in which I find the concept of *becoming-other* or *becoming-minoritarian* helpful in ways of thinking about cosmopolitanism is in terms of *becoming* as an ethical relation. In their major work, *A Thousand Plateaus* (2004), Deleuze and Guattari draw out their cartography of the concept of *becoming-intense*,



*becoming-animal, becoming-imperceptible...* From this very rich chapter I will focus on the Spinoza-inspired part, which speaks of the body as intensities of speed, slowness and affects. The body, to Deleuze and Guattari, is characterised not for the outer or inner qualities but by what it can do. In terms of journalistic practice in a cosmopolitan public realm, Chouliaraki's mediated *effective speech* which 'entails a view of action as establishing connectivities between people and forging relationships of responsibility' (Chouliaraki 2006: 201) transfers and applies the notion of action onto a practice of mediation. The non-reciprocal commitment with the other initiates action which forges more or less empathy from the receiver of the news (Chouliaraki 2006). In Chouliaraki's analysis the mediating function of the news constitutes the public as a 'body of action' while simultaneously presenting the receiver of news with the demand of the other (Chouliaraki 2006: 199) which demands approval and eventually action (Critchley 2007). The importance of activism and action, which Critchley and Gilroy also argued, is again pivotal in this ethical *becomings*. To Deleuze and Guattari, however, the body plays a major role and action alone cannot be transposed onto a representation or mediation of distant suffering (Chouliaraki 2006) which generates empathy. The body is relevant only in its affects and its affective connections to others. It is this composition of relation to others that constitutes the body's becoming, understood as an intense symbiosis with the other that leaves neither unchanged by the relation. So, becoming is not acquiring the qualities of the other, or feeling sympathy for the other, but rather it is a feeling with the other from within the other – becoming (the) other. Simultaneously, *becomings* is an ability to allow the other to affect the body – allowing the particles of the other to enter and reconstitute the body and affect its acts and thoughts. In the Spinozist abstract thinking, each person is an infinite multiplicity of smaller or larger scale by virtue of the composition of the relation into which his or her parts enter (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 280). That is, we are the sum of our affects and affective connections. However, these connections will always remain in excess. We will always be more than the sum of our parts because of relation. Ethical becoming is rather a morphed symbiosis and thus a metamorphosis of all implicated parties (Braidotti 2002, 2006). It is a doing and undoing of the self by the other (Butler 2004) but without the reduction of fully understanding or knowing the other (Glissant 1997).



This way of thinking about the subject-relation to the other grants the opportunity to think a subjectivity always in process and always multiple thereby avoiding the scholarly standpoint on feminist and ‘race’ identity formation (Collins 1991, Harding 1991) and the binary self-other relation discussed in chapter 1. It is continuously affected and undone by the other. The other is proximate by virtue of being part of the self but does not have to have physical or mental similarities to the self – or be geographically close. For journalism this means not only to take the perspective of the other or to reflect upon the practice of journalistic power relations, but to let the other affect the self, the journalism and the practice – to become not-one. Journalism is a fairly traditional and slow-changing practice and a little change may go a long way. But what I am proposing is a radical change of journalism because *becoming-minoritarian* or *becoming-other* is a dismantling of the journalistic objectivity and authoritative master-position of speaking the ‘truth’ for an undefined but unified ‘us’. It is a dismantling of the modern, rational journalistic subject referring back to the unified nation-state citizens. It is an undoing of journalism – a journalism as becoming and as excess of relation.

### 3.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

I have attempted to develop a framework for journalistic subjectivity as embodied and embedded experience encompassing issues of difference and of power and I have confronted the journalistic practice with questions of ethics and experience. The axis around which the discussions have turned in this and in the preceding chapters has been one of the self-other relation as it is established through journalism and thus interdependently in the social imaginary through reiterations of journalistic cultural memories. I drew on practical journalistic angles on the subject through a summary and analyses of qualitative interviews with journalists from the USVI analysed in chapter 2, and I held the relationships introduced by the journalists up to the theoretical writings on cosmopolitanism. The reworking of cosmopolitan journalistic subjectivity would consist of a displacement and an estrangement from cultural and political hegemony while acknowledging that the journalist-subject always remains a part of this hegemony – which cannot be escaped but only questioned. It is a constant displacement, or *decentring*, which helps to multiply points of resistance and thus the journalistic subjectivity stays in constant process – *differance* or *becoming*. Through the latter concept I suggested that the concept of globalisation is reworked into a



*detrterritorialisation* that allows for a breaking down of the binary positions of resistance versus hegemony, which is an unhelpful structure when it comes to doing journalism with Deleuze. It is however a structure I have already identified in chapters 1 and 2 when I argued against the identity politics of ethnic, sexualised, gendered, national etc. group formations. The relation of self-other is far more complex than that because subjectivity is always already *becoming*. Poster (2006) argues that the technological interface, in his words, the *humachine*, ‘constructs the subject through the specificity of its medium in a way different from oral or written or broadcast models of self constitution’ (Poster 2006: 41). However, whether communication is facilitated by technology or not, the other is never fully available to the self and so I want to allow for recognition of opaqueness in relation (Glissant 1997). I agree that technology makes a new construction of the subject possible and to some this particular interface may be determining to the subject formation in a given situation. Nevertheless, relation is always a process of subjectivity in multiple ways, and for technology to be the determining factor in a (common) subject position of all internet users in the same way is untenable. Varying emphases and aspects of ethnic background, gender, ‘race’ and sexuality are not necessarily subordinated to technological interfaces, but may even be truncated through online networks, chat-rooms or blogging. Journalistic cosmopolitanism is detrterritorialised, rather than being a wholesome unified and globally spanning morality or a dichotomised hegemony-resistance positioning. I furthermore investigated whether *becoming* could function as an ethical relation to the other and found that *becoming-minoritarian* enables political activism from the hegemonic position of journalism as well as allowing for an embodied and embedded journalistic subjectivity. I hope to have shown that theorising journalism through *becoming-minoritarian* can be used as a theory of the journalistic subject of relation and that it bridges the gap between the theory of journalistic craftsmanship and of cosmopolitanism and globalisation when related in an experimental vein to the practice of journalism.

### 3.4.1 *The experiment of journalism*

What I am tentatively proposing is a twofold experiment: Firstly the format and the models used by journalists to tell their stories – the training they have been given – needs to be challenged. Journalism needs new models that do not fix sources in



certain roles<sup>66</sup> but allow for new stories to be told from new perspectives creating new kinds of singular memories rather than repeating cultural memories as argued in chapter 2. These new formats need furthermore to remain negotiable so as not to exchange one stagnated model for another. What is more, telling stories from a new perspective and using new models of narration will throw up the question of ‘objectivity’ and ‘fair reporting’. Secondly, journalists’ experiences need to be confronted with new realities – networks need to be expanded. Following Deleuze and Guattari, when the context of the journalistic practice changes journalism is forced to change too. The question of ‘objectivity’ and whose voice is being heard will be thrown into perspective by a change of journalistic scenery, online or offline. Online civic journalism is already challenging ‘old’ media roles and bloggers are contributing to national newsfeeds as well as publishing their own agendas online. In chapter 1 I referred to Vron Ware’s references to ‘white’ reporters’ and scholars’ experiences of being ‘white’ when they were confronted with the experience of being ‘black’. These reporters and scholars were trying to understand from within the workings of racism in the US as well as in Europe.

This phenomenological approach to understanding, or letting oneself be affected by, the experience of the other is a way of kick-starting the process of *becoming*. The embodied and embedded journalistic subjectivity and his or her relation to the other and the community are brought into focus and awareness. This would mean setting up a journalistic experimental lab of developing new practices and experiences. A journalistic experimental lab would take the form of a personal and professional challenge to the journalist-subject within a setting of academic and professional journalistic collaboration. It would aim at developing journalism as shared experience. Experimenting with what journalism is or what forms are needed to tell a story journalistically challenges both the journalist and the receiver of the news story. The demand upon which this sort of experiencing journalism will call differs from that of the ethical demand of the suffering other only in the extra response it forges. The receiver of the news produced in an experimental vein can respond to this demand with political or charitable action (Chouliaraki 2006). Moreover an opening of a space for interaction and changing of the self as not-one is created. The response to the

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<sup>66</sup> See Andreassen (2007) for the consequences of Propp and Greimas’ actant models in TV journalism etc.



demand of the other is not outside the journalist-subject but rather always already a part of the subject in relation. It offers a possibility of metamorphosis and transposition (Braidotti 2002, 2006) of the ethical self-other relation through sharing embodied and embedded experience. I imagine such a lab to be developed within a framework of teaching journalism (and) through experiencing the other in contexts that differ from the singular journalist-subject's 'home'. I believe that setting up a journalistic experimental lab in which narrative models are challenged and developed through affective embodied and embedded experiences of the other culture, society or person is a way of dealing with the problems facing journalism in an age where the paradigms on which the trade is created no longer apply to the same degree as they did throughout the age of 'old' media and the way they used to when journalism as a practice was invented. I will return to the notion of the journalistic experimental lab in the conclusion to this dissertation.

In the following three case studies I identify the structures of self-other (of) relation discussed in this and the previous chapters and I challenge my findings with new approaches and ideas of collective relations and creative affirmations. In this way, the theories introduced in the first three chapters are allowed to develop further through analyses of the case studies.

### *3.4.2 Final words*

My aim has been, firstly, to return the ethical accountability of journalistic practice to a journalistic subject-position. Secondly, I have aimed at transposing this self-other relation between subjectivities to an expanded mediated and global ethical relation. I have used the legacies of 'race', gender and postcolonial scholars' work and the impact on phenomenological thinking of embodied experiences in order to critique egocentrism and universalisation of the white man's experience of the world embedded in the modern conception of journalism and repeated through journalistic reiterations of cultural memories to sustain social imaginaries. Doing Deleuzian journalism would then, perhaps, mean posing an ethical challenge to journalistically sustained social imaginaries by reconfiguring 'global' networks into ethical and singular embedded and embodied self-other relation.



Relationships matter and are the foundation for networks and relations between entities on a wider 'global' scale. However, an ethical call must encompass solidarity and acknowledgement of power relations. It must turn on the axis of rootedness in the structure of rhizomes. And it must involve an understanding of the complicity in reconstructions of social imaginaries and the power structure that entails. Journalistic subjectivity is in this dissertation theorised as a process of such complexities embodied in the experiences and the affects of the journalist-subject and embedded in the journalistic cultural memories that are continuously reiterated. However, journalist-subjects are in 'global' connection to the citizens and the netizens whose input and newsfeed is incorporated, and virally spreading and mutating simultaneously. The cosmopolitan journalistic relation is singular and based in the subject position and in subjectivity. Rather than a professional working relationship which aims at communicating moral obligations 'globally', journalistic cosmopolitanism is a networked ethical and singular relation. This dissertation does not deal with relationships as networks of technological developments and advances, rather it deals with relation, a journalism of relation. Whereas relationships are one-to-one connections in networks of entities and power positions, relation is multiple, always moving and in flux, inter-lacings of subjectivities. Technological advances may change journalistic practices, but in ethical relations between journalist-subjects and other subjects the *humachine* (Poster 2006) is just one variant and factor in multiple subjectivities.

The following three case studies will illustrate how these concepts of journalistic cultural memories, social imaginaries and journalistic subjectivities produce a potentially creative and affirmative journalism of relation.



## CASE STUDY 1:

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE STUDIES

In the three case studies that follow I focus on concrete journalistic productions and practices that reconstruct and deconstruct journalistic cultural memories and social imaginaries as laid out in the three previous theoretical chapters. Each of the case studies shows an aspect of journalistic cultural memory production and uses a range of cultural studies methodologies, such as semiotic analysis, discourse analysis and interdisciplinary content analysis. I approach the topic of journalistic cultural memory in the Danish journalistic and socio-political realm from an interdisciplinary perspective. Each case draws on a unique analytical framework derived from the theory presented in the previous three chapters. Thus, the case studies begin by reflecting on the methodological approach which will be functioning in the given chapter. The methodologies are consistently empirical. Moreover, they are all related to the interdisciplinary fields of postcolonial studies, gender studies, and ‘race’ studies, which I have embedded in the continental philosophical tradition of phenomenology (see introduction and chapter 1).

The cases are largely presented as examples of Danish journalism’s operationalisation and mediation of the concepts of ‘objectivity’ and ‘freedom of speech’ in terms of reproducing a unified ‘us’ and sameness. The first case study discusses these aspects of the Danish postcolonial relation to the United States Virgin Islands (USVI). Academically and in the media this relation is often overlooked and – the analysis will show – it is still reproduced using stereotypes emerging from a commonsensical and ignorant<sup>67</sup> world-view. The way in which the Danish commonsense reproduces and inflicts blindness towards one’s own political and cultural power position and complicity in journalistic and other mediated production is analysed in depth in the second case study. The Nordic national and cultural iconic figure of the Viking and its connection to genetic imagery and imaginary enable me to connect the script of commonsense, ‘white’ national and cultural narratives to the story of the ‘family of man’ and male hegemonic reproduction in the Danish social imaginary. Finally, the third case study exemplifies the conjuncture of ignorance and commonsensical

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<sup>67</sup> Again, I use this terminology in order to emphasise the double implications of the word ‘ignorant’: to wilfully not see or acknowledge and to be un-informed. I argue that both meanings of the word are applicable to the Danish reproduction of the social imaginary.



structure of journalistic cultural memory and names the implications of the blindness produced. The final case study presents a discursive analysis of the implications of the ‘cartoon controversy’ by connecting it to postcolonial, ‘racial’, and gender ignorance within the journalistic practice, production and education. I argue that Moslem religion is discursively set against not Christian religion but rationality and liberal democratic ideas of equality and tolerance during the cartoon controversy. However, these concepts which in the binary construction of ‘them’ and ‘us’ produce a Moslem irrational and religious ‘them’ and a rational and tolerant ‘us’ are in fact based on Christian assumptions and ideals (Peters 2005). This means that the concept and ideal of secularity or secularism<sup>68</sup> needs to be re-thought in terms of content and foundations. Secularity is a concept far more complex and hybrid than is assumed in recent controversies built on ‘them’ and ‘us’ binaries. It is important to provide a credible and historically grounded definition of what counts as European, secular and ‘objective’. It is moreover crucial to acknowledge the construction of European modernity and ‘civilisation’ in order to deconstruct and rework an ethical self-other relation.

Discussing the representations and reproductions mentioned above I want to point towards the potentiality of a journalism of relation within the case studies by challenging the analytical findings with the Deleuzian theories of memory, poststructuralist approaches to genetic narratives and deconstructive moves towards the Christian foundations of liberal-democratic discourse. The choice of these concepts is a continuation of the theoretical framework laid out in the previous three chapters. The Deleuzian and poststructuralist lines of argument uphold a non-unitary or multi-layered vision of the subject that also allows for ethical accountability. My ideas of a new cosmopolitanism of singular relations as not-one and of deterritorialised *becomings* are connected to these debates through a development of an awareness of journalistic subjectivities. Moreover, in the conclusion I will return to the journalistic experimental lab developed in chapter 3.

## 1.1 SITUATING THE US VIRGIN ISLANDS-DENMARK RELATIONS

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<sup>68</sup> The differences between the two concepts will be laid out in case study 3.



This case study is based in a (post)colonial relationship which has been overlooked by scholars and journalists alike for quite some time. It is the relationship between Denmark and the USVI. Denmark colonised the three Caribbean islands of St Thomas, St Croix and St John for more than two hundred years, though this common cultural and political history and colonial relationship neither features prominently in Danish schoolbooks nor in the media. In the USVI the historical relationship is part of the curriculum. This skewed emphasis on the importance of the common history generates an extreme lack of acknowledgement of Danish complicity in colonialism, slavery and slave trade in the Danish general public. In addition this lack of acknowledgement breeds general blindness and ignorance towards covert racialised hierarchies and categorisations based on nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century biological racial ideology, as one of this case study's foci exemplifies. It is not uncommon to find young Danes in their late teens who do not know that Denmark took part in slavery<sup>69</sup> and nothing points to the possibility that the older generation is better informed. The discourses and terminology of otherness often show traces of what media and cultural theorist Randi Marselis calls 'national self-conceptions of the Nordic countries as not having the "burden of guilt"' (Marselis forthcoming: 13).

Engaging with journalist-subject positions and relations to what I have called journalistic cultural memories (see chapter 2), in this case study I analyse a Danish TV documentary and Danish and USVI newspaper articles. I want to show the social and cultural constructions of cultural memories, of genealogical relations and of cultural implications in common (post)colonial history. As argued in chapter 2, cultural memories form a coherent representation of a common culture and identity which need to be repeated in order to continue having an effect. Paraphrasing van Dijk (2007) I extrapolated the term 'journalistic cultural memory' to emphasise the journalistic role in the creation and maintenance of cultural memories. However, these memories are further sustained through silencing other memories and stories in the social imaginary. The cultural non-memory in Denmark is prevalent on the topic of the USVI, and Denmark's responsibility for its diasporic population. My approach in this case study develops through the phenomenological accounts of the subject which I gave in chapters 1 and 2. Foregrounding the concept of journalistic cultural memory

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<sup>69</sup> Alex Frank Larsen: *Slavernes Spor (Traces of Slaves)* (Medialex Film & TV 2005), television documentary in four episodes.



and stressing the importance of the politics of perception, in terms of sensory and embodied experience of an other that is structurally and ethically necessary to the self, I am arguing for an embodied and embedded journalistic cultural memory. Moreover, in the case of Denmark and the USVI, cultural relations and memories, issues of not remembering and not mentioning are also foregrounded. Using the concept of journalistic cultural memories – memory being a concept for which moral responsibility is attached, as I argued in chapter 2 – also allows me to call attention to the ethical demands within historical accounts and socially and culturally re-enacted political relations to others.

The case study aims at exploring how covert racist notions of difference in the general public are carried through journalistic discursive and practice-based lack of acknowledged complicity. I offer a reading of journalistic practice and politics of positioning the journalist-subject as a way of explaining the persistence of racial stereotypes in Denmark and Danish journalism. I apply a phenomenologically inspired discourse analysis that aims at understanding journalistic discourse as an integral – and therefore dynamic and (re)constituting – part of the society in which it operates. The cultural, religious and political discourses are woven into the fabric of personal identities as well as notions of national and cultural belongings – that is, they are embodied and embedded. I engage with a broadly defined critical discourse analysis which I think is enriching to cultural studies (Threadgold 2003). That is, I emphasise the interrelation of ‘text and practices’ with ‘the institutional and wider social and cultural context of media practices, including relations of power and ideologies’ (Fairclough 1995: 33). I recognise hybrid intertextuality and mixture of genres and discourses within texts and understand these mediated representations as multifunctional and ‘oriented towards representation and constitution of relations and identities as simultaneous processes’ (Fairclough 1995: 33). This case study moreover draws on classic semiotic analysis as well as qualitative content analysis. However, my theoretical and methodological framework departs from, for instance, Fairclough’s structurally comparative approach. The analysis I seek to conduct sees the mediated news as deferral of ethical demands evoking responses according to their journalistic practices and discourses (Chouliaraki 2006). Moreover this analysis questions the underlying assumptions in order to deconstruct journalistic practices and argue for a new history and journalism operationalised on the basis of phenomenological



approaches informed by ‘race’ and gender scholars’ interventions. The analysis recognises that research that sets out to shed light on racist notions in journalism discourse is always political (Downing and Husband 2005). Simultaneously I argue that journalism on the issue of self-other relations is also always political and it is that politico-cultural undercurrent I want to catch and follow in this case study. I therefore find inspiration in Gloria Wekker’s (2006) radical argument against objectivity which suggests that ‘methodology provides information about the various ways in which one locates oneself – psychologically, socially, linguistically, geographically, epistemologically, and sexually – to be exposed to experience in a culture’ (Wekker 2006:4). I am moreover inspired by a ‘nomadic methodology’ (Braidotti 2006) tracing through affects and intensities and ‘[a]ccounting backwards for the affective impact of various items and data upon oneself [which] is the process of remembering’ (Braidotti 2006: 173). Pivotal in this Deleuzian/Braidottian notion of nomadic methodology of using memory as positive and productive capacity is that it is embedded and embodied and thus not comparative layers of texts and genres alone. In the following I take inspiration from these accounts when dealing with the journalistic representation and reproduction of history and historical memory. I will argue that both archival and culturally informed and sustained representations of history in different ways are embedded and embodied. Journalistic narratives about cultural hybridisation, homogeneity and heterogeneity throw into relief journalistic (co)production of ‘identities’ and belonging. As a former colony of Denmark, a present territory of the United States and a member of the Caribbean island basin, the question of cultural ‘identity’ and belonging are continuously debated in the USVI – most recently in connection with the islands’ fifth attempt at constructing a constitution. These circumstances foreground the multilayeredness and multiplicity in the USVI community and cultural ‘identities’.

## 1.2 ARCHIVES AND JOURNALISM

The axis on which this analysis turns is one of historical representation – that is, kinds of memory. The historical contingencies of allowing Denmark to gather all the documented data after the sale of the islands to the US and transfer the documents to Denmark still have an impact on the historical and journalistic manifestations in the coverage of cultural events and debates in the USVI and in Denmark. What is more,



the epistemological power sustained through knowledge of the colonial past begs the question of epistemological imperialism and the claim for reparations.

Traditionally in Denmark knowledge of the former colonies is presented in historical accounts. These accounts are based largely on the extensive national archives, interwoven with narratives of private journeys to the islands through which Danish historians (and often their wives) share their experiences of their nation's former possessions. Below I will discuss these accounts. Suffice it to say at this point, that the history books and educational books offered to students of history – should they choose to take an interest in this topic – are Danish-centred and, to a large extent, nationally romanticised accounts. Perhaps the absence of a black diaspora in Denmark is part of the reason for the lack of interest in the colonial past, or perhaps the urge to uphold a self-image of Nordic tolerance and humanitarianism has kept Danish academics and journalists from developing the scholarship. Books in the narrative style of Richard Price's *Alabi's World* (1990) are not represented in the Danish literature on colonial history. It must be noted, though, that Price's book, which interweaves four voices in an experimental composition of (hi)story-telling is quite unique. In that book, the voices of the maroons, the Dutch officials, the German Moravian missionaries and Price himself each have a separately identifiable font and style of recording. The Dutch official documents are counter-writing the narrated stories of the Surinamese maroon societies and in this way develop a conversation between the long-gone actors of history and memory.

In Denmark, in the late 1990s, challenging and nuanced approaches were introduced to the discourse on the (post)colonial relation between Denmark and the USVI in the form of scholarly articles, public debates published in newspapers, journalistic documentaries and unpublished doctoral dissertations. The emerging interest and shift in approach in Danish discourse on the former colonies were partly due to the fact that political and academic discussions arose around the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery on the colonial islands, in 1998. The political discussions were based mostly on the fact that the Danish minister of foreign affairs was invited to take part in the events surrounding the commemoration, but declined because the invitation was not extended far enough in advance and he could not find the time to travel to the USVI. Needless to say, the response was a disappointment to the USVI.



Academically, symposia were conducted and archives opened and restored so that that part of Danish history became more easily accessible to the Danish public, journalists and scholars. The archives, it must be noted, have always been public, but because of their size it was difficult to have an overview of their contents. Additionally, the records are mainly in Danish and therefore remain inaccessible to people who do not know the Danish language – I will return to this issue shortly.

Denmark probably holds one of the largest collections of artefacts and documents from a former colony of any European country. Hence the uncatalogued archives demanded in-depth knowledge of archival work and of the documents beforehand, as well as a healthy helping of patience, for them to be of any assistance to researchers (assuming that they know the language in which the documents are written). The archives which were sorted in 1998 are the primary source for Alex Frank Larsen's journalistic TV documentary, *Slavernes Slægt (Descendants of Slaves)* (2005), about the descendants of slaves living in Denmark and other Nordic countries. This documentary programme will be the focus of the first part of this analysis. In the documentary, the archives are used to trace personal stories through the public means of the national archives, or visualising the national archives through people's lives and stories. Journalistically the archives are personalised through these narratives and thus call on the viewer to identify with this largely forgotten part of Danish history. It therefore raises the question of journalism's role in archiving and remembering national and personal histories. It seems to be of little use to uphold the distinction between public and private, which is often the case in journalistic discourses of the public sphere (Habermas 2001) or to place either journalism or archives in one or the other category. Journalistic practice is an integral part of the construction of cultural memories and communication of historical events. The question which I wish to explore in this case study is then: How are cultural and racial stereotypes (re)produced through journalistic cultural memories and representation of historical events and signification in Danish journalism on the Danish-USVI historical relationship? The little journalism that deals with this topic is anti-racist in its intentions. Nevertheless, I argue that the racial stereotypes persist through blindness towards and ignorance of the other and through fixity of the format and practice within journalistic production. I continue the discussion of the possibilities of change within the journalistic practice and production in the following two case studies.



Journalistic institutions also add to the integral position of journalism and archival and historical memory. In 2008 the Jamaican Broadcasting Corporation had its entire collection of music and sound stolen (Orakwue 2008). The broadcasting corporation was entrusted with the cultural heritage of the country – among the recordings were irreplaceable recordings of Bob Marley, the Caribbean musical hero who introduced reggae and a version of Jamaican and Caribbean culture to British and US audiences (Gilroy 2002, Orakwue 2008) as well as the rest of the ‘western world’. The Marley recordings are so important and so irreplaceable, journalist Orakwue (2008) argues in an article on cultural heritage in *New African*, because being part of Jamaican history the recordings form the passage to Jamaica’s future (Orakwue 2008: 63). Knowing history, then, is the way to understanding the future. ‘Don’t forget your history. Know your destiny’, sings Marley in the song *Rat Race*. The slogan figures on posters and t-shirts and other Marley merchandise but it is connected with Marley’s broader message of emancipation of the mind and freedom<sup>70</sup> and to the ‘recovery of historical knowledge [which] is felt to be particularly important for blacks because the nature of their oppression is such that they have been denied any historical being’ (Gilroy 2002: 280). Similarly, Jeanette Bastian (2003) argues that: ‘A community without its records is a community under siege, defending itself, its identity, and its version of history without a firm foundation on which to stand’ (Bastian 2003: 87). Bastian’s claim is based in the abovementioned issue of the language barrier, to which is added a geographical barrier that hinders USVI citizens’ access to their history, the colonial archives now preserved in Denmark. The Danish archives are mainly in Copenhagen and Washington DC. However, knowing and remembering history is too painful for some. During Black History Month in Barbados 2008 it was widely discussed whether ‘talking about the past just has a negative impact on the present’ or whether ‘forgetting is a means to amnesia and the ability for mistakes to be repeated all over again’ (Williams 2008).

Thus, the issue of historical knowledge is two-headed. Orakwue is basing historical knowledge and cultural heritage on musical and performative cultural production, whereas Bastian and Gilroy argue that historical archives of written documents are

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<sup>70</sup> I am here referring to Bob Marley as a cultural icon and not to the whole of his body of work.



pivotal to ‘owning memory’ and thereby owning the future (Bastian 2003). If a country does not have access to its historical records, as in the case of the USVI, Bastian argues, ‘the community will replace them with something else – myth, legend, and oral tradition’(Bastian 2003: 86). That sort of cultural knowledge has to be continuously defended against the archival and written knowledge figuring in Danish official documents, to which only Danish-speaking people – the former colonisers – have access, Bastian contends. This means that a structure of power-knowledge is still operational and places the Danish (former) colonisers in an epistemological position of power over the cultural knowledge of the USVI citizens. This became apparent during the anniversary symposia in USVI, in which Danish-American historian Svend E. Holsoe questioned the plausibility of the USVI hero of emancipation, Buddhoe. The enslaved ‘General Buddhoe’ or ‘Bourdeaux’, according to USVI legend, led the demand for emancipation of the Danish slaves on St Croix in 1848. Statues have been raised in his name, songs written and books authored, and he is depicted holding the decree of emancipation with the words, ‘You have been emancipated’ on a mural in Government House, St Thomas. But Holsoe’s reading of the Danish documents showed no sign of a person by the name of ‘General Buddhoe’ or ‘General Bourdeaux’ and no records of a leader of emancipation as such (Bastian 2003:44-6). The question is, does it matter that no records of Buddhoe exist in the archives? The history he is embodying may have currency beyond the archives and in a different cultural and historical mode.

Although culturally sustained history can be based on historically documented events, this kind of historical knowledge, which is continuously produced through music, stories, food and re-enactments of historical events among other things, is always in danger of being refuted by the very same power that holds the documented historical archives. Nevertheless, culturally produced knowledge of legends and myths and so on is prominent in the community of the USVI. The archival historical accounts may be termed ‘documenting’ because of their descriptive character – the descriptions of course tend to have a European bias. The cultural historical accounts can conversely be named ‘experienced’ – not in the sense of ‘being there when it happened’ but in the sense of experiencing the history through narratives, family history and re-enactments.



Finally, in addition to the journalistic production of cultural memories and the recording of historical artefacts and events, journalism brings to the (post)colonial space of Danish-USVI relations a potential for a ‘globalised’ or transnational impact and affect – that is, cosmopolitanism. In chapter 3 I defined this potential as the cosmopolitan journalistic relation, which is singular and based in the subject position and in subjectivity. Rather than a professional working relationship which aims at communicating moral obligations ‘globally’, journalistic cosmopolitanism is a networked ethical and singular relation. In this case study I theorise this relation introducing the Deleuzian concept of History to journalistic cultural memory and archival knowledge used in journalistic production and practices. This allows me to return to the theoretical discussion introduced in the preceding chapters on journalistic potential for developing a journalism-becoming-minoritarian in a dynamic and open space.

### 1.3 REMEMBERING HISTORY

The documenting approach is dominant in the Danish literature discussing the historical relation between Denmark and the USVI. It is moreover an account that assumes an objective position to historical narratives through the usage of written archival documents. In the following I introduce the Danish approach to the issue of the former colonies so as to present the historical context as it may be found in Danish (semi-)scholarly books and books for primary and secondary teaching. These sources of information present a possible explanation to the internalisation of racial stereotypes still predominant in Danish commonsense discourse. I will return to this reproduction of racial stereotypes in the following analyses, but before I embark on the analyses I want to introduce the history of Danish-USVI relations as it is commonly presented to students and laypersons who are interested in the subject.

Denmark colonised the West Indian islands of St Thomas and St John in (respectively) 1672 and 1718, and the island of St Croix was purchased from France in 1733. Slavery soon followed as the plantations expanded and it continued for between one hundred and two hundred years until Denmark, following England, Sweden and France, finally abolished the practice in 1848. The slave trade was officially given up in 1803.



Danish literature critical about the former colonies in the West Indies is scarce, though some popular volumes appeared throughout the last century. Anyone who wants to study the literature is usually referred to Thorkild Hansen's illustrated trilogy; *Coast of Slaves*, *Islands of Slaves* and *Ships of Slaves*.<sup>71</sup> These were first published in Danish between 1967 and 1970, and tell the gruesome story of lives lived in bondage and colonial consequences in the engaging, story-telling genre of the documenting novel. Publications during the later half of the twentieth century tended to be easily-read booklets meant for general education on the one hand, or scholarly historical overviews published by prominent historians on the other. Most of these publications<sup>72</sup>, however, support a romanticised national view of a 'lost paradise' and 'our tropical colonies' (Lauring 1978, Hornby 1980). The exoticisation reaches explicit racist pronouncements in, for instance, Hans Gregersen's easy-to-read book for general education (1993). Gregersen writes about his visit to an old sugar-mill. The plantation connected to the mill is owned by a white woman, who lives there with her two dogs. The dogs do not bark at Gregersen and his wife when they arrive and asked about the reason for this the woman 'smiles a sly smile: "They only bark at blacks"' (Gregersen 1993: 33, my translation). Gregersen makes the point clear: 'In other words, the dogs have learnt that it is the black inhabitants on the islands they have to beware of. It is first and foremost blacks who commit the crimes.' (Gregersen 1993: 33, my translation). Also, quite a number of the books express more implicit and tuned down presentations of unchallenged exoticism (Hornby 1980; Døygard 2002).

One of the more reputable historical accounts of the Danish colonial possessions is that by Ove Hornby (1980). Despite having been published over thirty years ago and relaying of some disputed facts (Gøbel 2002), it is still considered by fellow historians as one of the main sources for knowledge about the colonial history of Denmark. On relations between the colonisers and the colonised cultures, Hornby writes that after the Napoleonic Wars at the beginning of the nineteenth century the golden days were over. The profit that Denmark gained from the colonies before and during the wars turned into deficit and 'the motherland' was presented with demands for a capital flow

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<sup>71</sup> In 1971 Hansen was awarded the Nordic Council Prize for the trilogy *Slavernes Kyst* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1967), *Slavernes Skibe* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1968) and *Slavernes Øer* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1970). The titles were translated into English and published by Sub-Saharan Publishers in 2002 and 2006. They are now available from Michigan State University Press.

<sup>72</sup> I conducted a research trip to the Copenhagen National Library in autumn 2007 in order to gain an overview of the publications available on the topic.



to the islands. All of this generated discussions about selling the islands.<sup>73</sup> The reasons for this rather calculated attitude towards selling the islands are to be found in a cultural phenomenon, Hornby believes. He writes:

Contributing to the coolness which marked both the Danish and the West Indian debates about a potential sale was the fact that though the Danes – with more or less talent and luck – had administered the colony, they had never really managed to leave a national impression. The everyday language spoken from the beginning was Dutch and later Creole and English, while Danish was mainly spoken among the stationed officials. The large majority of the population were slaves or descendants of slaves who had been transported from Africa to the islands, but even among the white plantation owners and merchants the Danes were an absolute minority. (Hornby 1980: 10, my translation)

Hornby explains the lack of interest in the islands in the hybrid multiculturalism that structured the societies on the islands and he argues that because the Danes were a minority in numbers they must have had a relative minor cultural influence as well. But this argument is only sustainable if culture is understood as a closed circuit impenetrable by other cultures in hybrid forms or as a quantitative whole disregarding minority cultures. Also Denmark is seen as not religious<sup>74</sup> and so as not implementing socio-religious structures. I will return to the importance of the role played by religion in the colonial discourse shortly. The account seems to suggest that multiculturalism prevents and rejects a sense of societal belonging by virtue of its very hybridity. History scholar Louise Sebro (2005) points to the colonies as not only multicultural but also a burgeoning capitalist society that differed markedly from the eighteenth-century Danish 'motherland'. Social structures were redefined in the colonies through wealth and property rather than through heritage, which was the dominant form of status in Denmark at the time. And the categories of social classes saw ambiguities that were not present in the 'motherland'. For instance, in the colonies colour defined social status, but also gender and certainly property played an enormous part in social

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<sup>73</sup> The possibility of a sale had been discussed for a number of years before then but the right price had not been named (Bastian 2003).

<sup>74</sup> It seems to be of importance that it is *national impressions* rather than political or historical marks and consequences that would call for Danish and other colonisers' accountability.



positioning and hence political power (Sebro 2005). The initial Danish disinterest in the slaves' religious education and cultural lives enabled the cultivation of new creole societal and juridical roles, lifestyles and religious practices all carefully negotiated within the notions of gender, race and class (Simonsen 2004, Sebro 2005). The Caribbean colonial society was hierarchically stratified according to multilayered categories of skin colour, gender, wealth and occupation.

This all meant that the colonies were (and are) seen as a society culturally, socially and politically different from the European part of Denmark. Whereas European Denmark was in the midst of an enlightenment of liberal thoughts of freedom and humanism under the rule of autocracy,<sup>75</sup> the plantation owners on the islands preferred the profits afforded by unpaid labour and the regulations from the King of Denmark were not necessarily adhered to. The colonies are portrayed as existing in a rather anarchistic sphere. Similarly, the description of the colonies as multicultural emphasises the idea that Denmark is a homogeneous country and population. This is an idea which persists today.

### *1.3.1 Religion and slavery in the Danish colonies*

Denmark was and is Lutheran protestant in religion.<sup>76</sup> Because of the Danes' initial disinterest in the slaves' religious affiliations the slaves were able to bring with them and subsequently develop their traditional religious traditions in the Caribbean. This fact has consequences for the later Christianisation and the development of potential Afro-Caribbean-Christian identities based on the slaves' African ethnicities and belongings, as well as their newfound Christian identification (Sebro 2005). But this differentiation is not necessarily recognised by the Danish and USVI authors when it comes to the former Danish colonies.

Within the literature on the Danish West Indies there is an interesting schism between the arguments often held by scholars of African-American studies or 'race' studies and the viewpoint taken by Danish historians, such as Hornby, who is telling 'the Danish story'. Whereas American scholar Neville Hall (1992) is certain that

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<sup>75</sup> Writers such as Oxholm (1797) and Alexander (1843) attest to this development.

<sup>76</sup> Initially the colonies were Lutheran Protestant too, but as most Danes feared moving there, Denmark needed to attract to its colonies colonists of other nationalities (such as French and Dutch) who belonged to other faiths. This is why Denmark instigated freedom of religion in the colonies.



missionary practices were pervasive in the colonies and sustained the reasons for colonial expansion altogether, Hornby to the contrary finds that this was not the case with Danish colonial expansion. Moreover he argues that it was not the case with any other European colonial expansion either. Though Hornby does write (Hornby 1980: 176-80) about the work of the Moravian and the Lutheran Churches in their attempts to christen the slaves, he nevertheless focuses on the Lutheran Church's failure to establish a church in the West Indies rather than on the controlling function of the Christian activities. Thus, Hornby is underlining his earlier statement about the lack of Danish cultural-religious imprints on the islands' cultural developments. In contrast to Hornby, Hall (1992) writes specifically *about* the slaves' perspective and perhaps more significantly *from* the perspective of the slaves. Hall learned Danish in order to find the African perspective in the sub-context of the Danish archives (Bastian 2003). Hall argues firstly that, in order to subjugate slaves into (un)willing labour, the slave-owners developed an ideology that provided a 'comforting and justificatory theoretical foundation for man's inhumanity to fellow man'. Secondly it was hoped that the slaves would 'internalize' 'such ideas and acceptance of their bondage' (Hall 1992: 34). In this ideology Christianity played a dominant role. Hall argues that the connection between Christianity and racism lies in the 'curse of Ham', which in the eyes of the slave-owners tied the slaves to their subordinated position as labourers through 'God and nature'. Their black skin was taken to signify evil, which in turn was connected to moral inferiority in the contemporary literature. However, since the Africans were seen to be inferior *by nature* it was not education and religion, which could restrain them, but fear of punishment alone, the argument went. I think that in the light of this, the Danish state's unwillingness to impose Christianity upon the enslaved Africans can no longer be seen as a question of restraint and modesty shown by the quantitative minority on the islands, but rather a racist assumption of cultural and hereditary inferiority which made education superfluous and moral awakening unlikely.

Later the Moravian church<sup>77</sup> and its activities came to play an important role in the lives of the slaves on the Danish colonial islands, but it simultaneously functioned as a social control over that part of their lives which was not already controlled through

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<sup>77</sup> In particular the Moravian church played a role in the lives of the enslaved Africans in the Danish colonies, but many other religious societies have a place on the islands today as well as then.



the restrictions and regimes of the plantations. Illustrative of Christianity's double-edged sword in the colonies is that, through baptism and education in the Christian tradition of docile servitude, the Africans were urged to internalise 'the precepts of humility, patience and willing obedience' (Hall 1992: 46). Slaves did not attain their freedom upon converting to Christianity, however. Meanwhile, Christianity was also evoked as a reason to treat slaves better in the anti-slavery ideology. The slaves were seen to have 'a natural aspiration to freedom' as part of the human condition. This shift in Christian narratives, in which the biological racist arguments slowly took over from the religious arguments, is not a Danish narrative alone. As the philosophical foundations for the justification of slavery weakened in most European countries during the latter half of the nineteenth century, due to the Enlightenment's denunciation of religious rule and the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of the Species* (1859), they were readily exchanged for racist ideologies argued with the support of biology (Hall 1992: 47). Religion was the tool by which slaves could become humanised. In this sense the Danish historical narrative follows the logic of nineteenth-century Europe in which the 'white man's burden' was the burden of Christianising the other, along with civilising the other, in the first half of the century and less prominently in the later half. The religious argument was then exchanged for biological and evolutionary determinism (van der Veer 2001).

### *1.3.2 The colonial press*

The contemporary and historical religious and cultural representation in scholarly and academic work presents a division between the Danish-focused and the Caribbean-focused literature. The divisions differ in shapes in the historically and disciplinary alternating contexts and times, but there is a constant disconnection between the two realms. In the historical literature this is blamed on the press. For instance, Oxholm (1797) asserts that he wants to rectify the slander that flourishes in Denmark about the colonies and the colonial lifestyle. Since he believes that freedom of the press is the most important form of freedom, because it leads to 'the truth', he makes a call for more information about the colonies in the press. This potential for reaching the truth through the press is nevertheless regrettably often ignored and neglected, and freedom of the press is instead used for satire, ridicule and suspicious slander (Oxholm 1797: 12), and thus is much writing on the colonies conducted, Oxholm asserts. One hundred years later the significance of the press in the role of the colonial structure is



still claimed (Fischer 1896). Fischer believed the reason for the lack of engagement in the ‘motherland’ was to be found especially in the fact that the editors of the local papers were reliant on the governors of the islands. It was, in effect, a state- or governor-controlled censorship. Fischer, then, makes an argument for democratic division of labour. Among the African descendants on the islands the press was used in the fight for freedom and for agency. In the early twentieth century, D. Hamilton Jackson travelled to Denmark to argue his case for freedom of speech of the black labouring population to the Danish king and government. Hamilton Jackson believed in the democratic system and in freedom of expression and he started the first independent newspaper, *The Herald*, as well as the labour movement on the islands.<sup>78</sup>

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries the role of the news press and media in relation to cultural connections and mediations between people has been neglected in the Danish public debates on the USVI. When it comes to postcolonial relations between Denmark and the Caribbean, political debates are preferred realms and some issues are suspiciously lacking representation in the Danish press – I am thinking here of the Crucian movement which demands reparation in the form of a public apology and restitution from Denmark and which has contacted the Danish government directly on this issue.<sup>79</sup> The following analysis will encompass a discussion on what the role of the press in this relation may look like today. This case study will also discuss how the press relays the transnational connection in terms of culturally mediated and archival accounts of the islands’ history and how the stereotypes of otherness are reproduced.

#### 1.4 DOCUMENTING HERITAGE: THE NARRATIVES IN *SLAVERNES SLÆGT*<sup>80</sup>

So how do these historical representations play out in Danish discourse and social imaginary concerning the former colonies? One commentator on a debate about the

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<sup>78</sup> D. Hamilton Jackson is moreover celebrated in the USVI and is commemorated on 1 November every year.

<sup>79</sup> The African-Caribbean Reparations and Resettlement Alliance (ACRRA) has worked on retrieving ‘reparations’ from Denmark since 2005. In 2008, the founder of the alliance and the president for the Caribbean Institute for a New Humanity Inc., Shelly Moorhead, initiated a hunger strike to attract attention to the issue. At the time of producing this dissertation no mention of this event had occurred in the Danish press. See for instance [www.acrra.org](http://www.acrra.org), <http://www.onepaper.com/stcroixvi/?v=d&s=News:Local&p=1212901647>, and [http://www.virginislandsdailynews.com/index/article\\_home?id=17627572](http://www.virginislandsdailynews.com/index/article_home?id=17627572)

<sup>80</sup> Alex Frank Larsen: *Slavernes Slægt* (*Descendants of Slaves*) (Medialex Film & TV 2005), television documentary series in four episodes.



Danes and the other (Madsen 2006) finds that ‘the Danes do not feel guilt towards Africans because they are white or because they are European simply because other white people or other Europeans abused African slaves’ (Madsen, 2006).<sup>81</sup> This is, of course, only one man’s deluded opinion based on a highly selective memory of the Danish colonial past and history, but it is not an uncommon opinion among Danes, I would claim<sup>82</sup>. “Race” and “racism” have simply not been seen as relevant in the Nordic countries. This might be due to national self-conceptions of the Nordic countries as not having the “burden of guilt”, which is often associated with “whiteness” in other contexts’, writes Randi Marselis (Marselis forthcoming: 13). This is also the claim of *Slavernes Slægt*, which in every introductory voice-over repeats that the colonial history is unknown to the Danes, but the stories are now being uncovered for the first time. The opinion which Madsen and Marselis discuss above underlines the necessity to rethink – rather than abolish – the historical narrative so as to include Danes and Scandinavians as a whole in the categories of ‘white people’ and ‘colonisers’. The historical literature reiterated in the preceding section of this case study reflects the general Danish disinterest (then and now) in the colonial legacy and the consequences borne by the people who were ‘sold’ along with the islands in 1917. The documentary series *Slavernes Slægt* (2005) seems to attempt to make visible the white hegemonic power that is now invisible to the populations of the Nordic countries. It ‘uncovers’ stories of the Danish colonial past and it emphasises the Danish role in the slave trade and slavery. It does this through the narratives of private lives.

#### 1.4.1 *Slavernes Slægt*

*Slavernes Slægt* (2005) was produced and directed by Alex Frank Larsen and distributed through his own production company, Medialex Film & TV. The documentary is divided into four episodes<sup>83</sup> presenting a number of protagonists –

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<sup>81</sup> My translation from: ‘Danskerne føler sig ikke skyldige som hvide eller europæere over for afrikanere, bare fordi andre hvide mennesker eller andre europæere har mishandlet afrikanske slaver.’

<sup>82</sup> Significantly, Anders Ellebæk Madsen’s opinion was published in a Christian debate forum. The role of the Lutheran Protestant religion in the Nordic countries and its connection to the notion of whiteness in a European context is another point of discussion, which I will embark on in case study 3.

<sup>83</sup> The first documentary series, *Slavernes Slægt*, was based on personal accounts of genealogical research. It was followed by a sequel of another four shorter episodes, which were not based on the same sort of personal accounts. This latter documentary series, titled *Slavernes Spor* (*Traces of Slaves*) (2005, see note 69 above) presents artifacts, people, performances and places pivotal to the understanding of the Danish role in the slave trade and transport. *Slavernes Spor* is pedagogically



amateur genealogists – looking for or simply narrating their ancestral lines in the Danish National Archives in Copenhagen and elsewhere. Through their personal narratives a certain cultural memory emerges, which is supported by the journalistic editorial choices of voice-over narration, music and cover-shots and so on. The documentary can therefore be said to be employing what in chapter 2 I called journalistic cultural memories in order to explain the Danish relation to the USVI. On an over-arching journalistic level, the macro level, the documentary is telling the story of one aspect of the history of the Danish national state while on the micro level this journalistic intention is being supported, and sometimes challenged, through the narratives of individual Danes and other Scandinavians. Both the journalistic and the personal narratives are largely supported by archival documentation. I present the discursive narrative and audiovisual line in the documentary's four episodes while focusing on the discourses and motifs supporting the genealogical lines claimed in the personal narratives based on a number of themes. I focus on the protagonists' narratives about themselves and the journalistic narratives about the relation between former colonised and coloniser – both in words and visually.

The documentary bases the protagonists' search in the origins and genealogies of enslaved Africans, which are recorded in Danish merchants' records of the importation of slaves. Their names<sup>84</sup> and familial relations while enslaved were meticulously written down by the Danish administration on the islands and on the slave transporting ships and they are now available in long lists of documents in Copenhagen and Washington DC. In the documentary *Slavernes Slægt* the idea of origin and genealogy is unfolded in themes related to visibility, geography, musicality and voice, which I introduce and follow in my analysis below.

#### *1.4.2 On racial visibility*

In a discursive analysis of the television documentary *Slavernes Slægt* (*Descendants of Slaves*), Randi Marselis (forthcoming) identifies two main strands of representation. Firstly she examines how 'mixed race ancestry' is narrated by the documentary's protagonists in discursive-performative terms. Secondly she identifies

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narrated and presented. It is not subjected to analysis here, but it affirms Larsen's political and professional engagement in telling the story of Danish colonialism.

<sup>84</sup> Mainly the European given names – the African names were largely ignored.



the difference between US and Nordic relations to 'race'. The documentary, Marselis concludes, bases otherness on the claimed visual difference between the stereotypical Danish look (blond hair and blue eyes) and the descendants' 'darker' looks. The viewer is constantly invited to scan the descendants' faces for phenotypical differences by, for instance, superimposing family portraits of enslaved relatives onto contemporary portraits or television stills of the protagonists. This visual emphasis is underlined by the protagonists' own narratives. In the case of the charismatic protagonist of the first episode, Camilla Marlene Jensen, Jensen has spent the past year and a half looking for her ancestry line in Danish archives. Her search is prompted by several people's inquisitive questions about the possibility of 'dark blood' in her veins. In episode 3, another Danish protagonist, Henning Palmann, also alludes to the visual prompts he has been getting due to his dark hair and eyes. To both Jensen and Palmann the use of family photographs is very important and Marselis points out that this emphasis on visibility is connected to a common-sense biological understanding of 'race' which is pervasive in the Nordic realm. It is 'an awkward convergence between genealogist terminologies and racist notions of "black blood" [which is] used to thematize visible difference both by off-screen narrator and by the descendants', Marselis asserts (forthcoming: 13).<sup>85</sup>

Additionally Marselis discusses the dissimilarities between the US and the Nordic expression and experience of 'race'. As I noted in chapter 1, the ideas of biologically based 'races', eugenics, and by extension the notion of 'race' in the Nordic countries was subdued after the Second World War. This means that though racial stereotypes have been transposed into an everyday racism (Essed 2002) in which African descent is matter-of-factly connected to stereotypes about rhythmic abilities, musicality, sexuality and physical strength etc. 'race' as such is not recognised as a factor of power differentiation in the Nordic countries. I will return to some of these structures and how they reflect a preoccupation with liberal democratic ideals of tolerance and equality in case study 3. In contrast to the Nordic silence on 'race', the US context is focused on the colour-line and the 'one-drop-rule' in which 'blackness' as a minority group identity is underscored (Chapter 1, and see Marselis forthcoming).

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<sup>85</sup> The awkward connection is furthermore discussed in depth in case study 2 in relation to *Blood of the Vikings* and the genealogical searches for 'Viking blood' in contemporary Britons' veins.



Parallel to the protagonists' investigative narrative, the episodes follow a visual discourse re-enacting historical moments of capture into slavery, ship transportation, and close-ups of foot chains and scared, screaming African faces. This visual discourse represents Copenhagen through architectural gems from the Golden Age or the Florissant period in Danish history accompanied by classical music. This audio-visual representation enables a binary between the European, wealthy and 'civilised' Denmark and the oppressed, chained and powerless enslaved Africans. While Jensen and Palmann and the other micro level narratives embody a merger of Danish and African lineage, Larsen's macro level audio-visuals emphasise insurmountable differences and asymmetrical relations. The schism between the discourses could be seen as a division between respectively a private and a public realm of colonialism. It presents a tension between the anti-racist intention of the programme and the commonsensical Danish discourse on inherent racial differences. This tension is elaborated in the following themes as well.

#### *1.4.3 On geographical belonging:*

Another strong motif supporting the genealogical lines claimed in the personal narratives is based on the notion of geographical belonging. In the first episode, Jensen researches archives in Copenhagen, Washington and London to find her ancestors, and the camera follows her search as well as portraying her through her job as a schoolteacher and through interviews conducted in St Croix about her research. Jensen's narrative is one of investigation – detective work – and one of connections to be found, dots to be connected. The connections she is following in her investigation are geographical, her first breakthrough comes when she discovers that her great grandfather, who was born in the colonies, lived most of his life in the same part of Copenhagen as Jensen grew up in. As a matter of fact, he and his adoptive family lived in the same street as Jensen, which makes her exclaim: 'There is a meaning to all of this – there is somebody – I had to begin this [investigation]'.<sup>86</sup> The geographical closeness is foundational for the more speculative and emotional connection to her ancestors. This leads to the connection which is indefinably genetic or relational. Jensen feels she 'owes' it to her relatives to dig up the ancestral line and make visible what has been hidden in Danish history for so long. She tells Larsen that

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<sup>86</sup> My translation of: '...Der er en mening med det her nu – der er nogen – jeg skulle i gang med det her'.



the tales of slavery and the Atlantic slave transport always impressed themselves on her and she could not forget them. It is, as Larsen states late in the first episode, ‘a blood relation’ and this blood relation infuses her with an inherent sense of connectivity. ‘I am really proud of my heritage and finding out about it. I can understand why I took certain directions in life, why I went to South Africa for five years. I see a connection now,’ she tells the audience at a university on Tortola where she speaks on her journey to the Caribbean, where her ancestors were enslaved. In the second episode the geographical connection is truncated by the protagonist Besiakov who finds that being in St Croix and meeting all his extended family relations is like ‘coming home’ and performing in Frederiksted with local musicians makes him understand where he is ‘coming from’. Like the ‘blood relation’, the ‘land’ or the ‘soil’ of their ancestors awakens a feeling of obligation and connection.

So far, there are two kinds of geographies at play; one is the connection Jensen feels to the place in Copenhagen and both she and Besiakov feel later in St Croix which they share with their ancestors. The second is the trajectory in particular Jensen’s life is taking and its connection to her ancestral past. It is ‘calling’ her to a faraway place which is linked to a blood relation – an inherent longing or yearning. A third geographical notion is underlined in the complicated family journeys which are rehearsed in the documentary. The many long journeys the protagonists and their ancestors have taken are exemplified in the fourth episode. One family portrayed in this episode is the Munis family. This family contains two stories. One is about Alex Munis, who is originally from Nigeria and who found out that he may in fact be related to a Danish official stationed at the slave fort in southern Ghana. Alex Munis tells his family’s history of slavery in Brazil and their return to Nigeria after the end of slavery. He also tells the story of how he went to Britain to work in cinemas, but was unable to work due to his skin colour. Seeing a famous tourist poster<sup>87</sup> advertising ‘Wonderful Copenhagen’, he decided to go to Denmark. He met his future wife there and they had a child as well as Alex adopting his wife’s daughter from a previous relationship, Marianne. The adopted daughter’s story makes up the second half of the family story. She has found her biological family in Sierra Leone with the help of letters her father sent to her mother and which her mother gave to Marianne. Marianne

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<sup>87</sup> The poster is from the 1950s and shows a police officer holding back the traffic in order to allow a duck and her ducklings to cross the street.



Munis is a teacher in a school which focuses on global issues and she makes a point of teaching the students about colonial times and the slavery that went on. The Munis' stories point to the deterritorial trajectories of transversal subjectivities.

I want to dwell a bit on these terms, which I introduced in chapter 3. Transversal subjectivities go beyond the colonial binary and allow subjects to identify and move across boundaries of colour, geographical belonging and family 'blood' relations. The Munis family narrative does not define them by one historical trajectory but rather it continuously defines them through intertwining histories and transnational power relations. However, the Munis family and the other families portrayed alongside them in episode 4 are divided by cover-shots and musical arrangements of a particularly binary constructing character. I will come back to these identity-generating and fixating cover-shots in the next section. It should be noted at this point that the connotations of this editorial decision to divide the personal narratives with the binary representations fixes the personal protagonists in roles defining them as other due to their skin colour and due to their geographical sense of belonging and trajectories.

#### *1.4.4 On black musicality*

The protagonist in the second episode, Besiakov, is the grandson of a young boy of African descent, who in 1905 was taken from St Croix to Copenhagen to be exhibited as part of the national exhibition about the Danish colonial possessions. Though the boy, whose name was Victor Cornelins, was supposed to return to his mother and the rest of his family after the exhibition was over, the plans were changed and he was placed in foster-care.<sup>88</sup> As he later in life achieved fame, this episode of the documentary consists partly of an old televised interview with Cornelins himself conducted in the 1970s and partly of the investigations into his family relations in the Caribbean sought out by two of his grandchildren. This way Cornelins plays a big role in the telling of his own story. I will return to the issue of voice below.

Cornelins makes a point about connecting himself to the Danish cultural and social imaginary through his narrative about the USVI which he describes in exotic terms,

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<sup>88</sup> Victor Cornelins has authored books about his life as well as having been the subject of other authors' work. See website for more information: <http://www.lokalarkiver.dk/nakskov/text/lokal/cornelins/> and [http://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victor\\_Cornelins](http://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victor_Cornelins).



adding monkeys and colourful birds to the islands' fauna. He also emphasises his love of classical music, which is the same kind of music that Larsen uses to connote European 'civilisation' in the audio-visual side to the documentary commented on above. This stereotypical use of music goes a step further in this second episode: the grandchildren, Ben Besiakov and Lotte Cornelins, are cousins, but it is mostly Ben who carries the narrative. This is underlined in his connection to music. Cornelins senior was a music teacher and conductor of classical choirs. As mentioned, his favoured music was classical and 'spirituals'. He did not enjoy jazz, which is the music favoured and performed by his grandson. At the end of the episode, Besiakov performs in Tivoli where his grandfather was once exhibited and so the narrative comes full circle with Besiakov rather than with Lotte Cornelins, who is a tailor by trade. Besiakov also performs in Frederiksted, St Croix, with local musicians and speaks on a local radio show about his connection to music and to St Croix. His music is thus tied in with the music of the Crucians in opposition to the music of his grandfather.

The connections which are sought in this episode are connections of music and musicality as well as relational and cultural connections that spring from this talent. The point is furthermore made through the narrative voice-over, which states that during slavery music was prohibited and so, the voice-over concludes, music means more than entertainment. What exactly music meant to the enslaved Africans is not elaborated. Within the civilising project of white supremacy in the colonies, Gilroy (2004a) believes that '[m]usic expressed and confirmed unfreedom while evolving in complex patterns that pointed beyond misery toward reciprocity and prefigured the democracy yet to come in their antiphonic forms' (Gilroy 2004a: 200). Similarly, dancing, Gilroy states, was a way of claiming back the body which was the property of the 'white' slave owners. African musicality and traditional dance is also sustained in the interludes between different protagonists in episode 3 and 4 in particular. The third episode tells the story of four individual and otherwise unconnected families (one of which is the aforementioned Munis family), whose journalistic narratives are intersected by an audio-visual presentation which shows parts of an African dance group performing a dance theatrical rendition of the slave trade from the 'Gold Coast' in southern Ghana to the Caribbean. Again, the connection between African culture and physical and bodily expression go hand in hand. However, the exoticism which



presents itself through commoditisation of black culture in the ‘western’ world (Gilroy 2004a: 214) and through turning the African dancers into unexplained spectacles, is lurking under the surface of Larsen’s narrative about the importance of music. The lack of engagement with the meaning of music and dance during slavery leaves the viewer to preserve the common-sense racist stereotypes so prominent in Danish discourse. The discourse on musicality in *Slavernes Slægt* is an example of Larsen’s intentions of anti-racism, which unfortunately end up in re-emphasising racial stereotypes and consumerist spectatorship. Because no real alternative is suggested and because the nuances of African diasporic culture are not explored, connections between African descendants and musicality and dance stand as yet another simplification of the other.

#### *1.4.5 On subaltern voice*

One of the features of these short personal stories that make up the narratives of the two last episodes of the documentary is the meeting of the trajectories of the extended families and the expressions of the importance of knowing the family history. Many of these expressions are filled with ideas of exoticism in relation to ‘black blood’ and stereotypes related to ‘rhythm’, ‘musicality’ and feelings and looks of ‘outlandishness’. Though racism is also discussed in the programmes there is a persisting covert stereotyping of ‘blackness’ coupled with an expressed pride in having part in this ‘black blood’.

The documentary remains on the narrative side of the Danes. It is the Danes who are telling the story – speaking – supported by documented archival artefacts and records, whereas Afro-Caribbean and Africans are being visually represented through a dance performance, with scenes from Spielberg’s Hollywood feature *Armistad*, and by means of representational cover-shots often featuring pictures of sandy beaches and water as well as pictures from the local carnival. Thus, ‘blackness’ is connected to anachronistic and bodily space, whereas ‘whiteness’ is connected to voice. A particular example of this is pointed out by Marselis: ‘The camera shows participants at a family reunion, focusing on a middle-aged man who does not get a voice in the documentary, but is obviously pointed out because of his dark complexion, dark eyes and curly hair’ (Marselis forthcoming: 10). The Afro-Caribbean and Africans who do speak are mainly Danish citizens and living in Denmark – that is, people who have a



Danish perspective. A Crucian relative of Ben Besiakov and Lotte Cornelins, Gail Watson-Chiang, is the only Afro-Crucian who speaks for an extended period of time in the episodes and the only one of Afro-Crucian descent to whom the episode returns several times. This skewed representation means that though the stories of colonialism and Denmark's complicity in slavery are uncovered and perhaps realised by the Danes watching the documentary, they are also glossing over and simplifying a part of the stories – the part that talks *about* the African and the Crucian story and *from* the African and Crucian perspective. That is, the tradition of discussing the colonial past through the one-sided perspective which was prevalent in the historical accounts discussed above is kept in this journalistic representation. The simplification of part of the stories is further emphasised in the representations of the Africans, Crucians and slavery in which Africans and Afro-Crucians are either dancing (as a performance about slavery or in the carnival) or playing music.

The representation is reiterating, on the one hand, the powerless situation of enslaved people and on the other the 'exotic' stereotypes of 'musical and rhythmic Africans'. This is done to an extent where the binary position is about 'white' power and 'civilisation' against black submission and creativity. Coupled with the speechlessness of the Afro-Crucians and the speaking subjects of Danish descent the documentary leaves the Afro-Crucians monolithic and deprives them of agency. The voice of the Afro-Crucians is silent or represented through the 'western' voice (Spivak 1988). The stereotypes about the otherness of the other are cemented despite the documentary's attempt to uncover untold stories.

The West Indian-born people of African descent who are portrayed with some form of agency are the deceased ancestors to Swedish and Icelandic family trees, who fought their way to freedom. But notably they are not present (alive) to tell their own story. The exception to this is Cornelins, who through the interview conducted in the 1970s, speaks about his liking for Denmark and classical music. The interview may be analysed in the context of the economic-political and socio-cultural Denmark during that decade, however, presented in the present documentary, his narrative seems to be pitched against his grandson's musical and mental journey 'home' to the former colonies. This pitch neglects the potential other story of African musicality and reduces African music to rhythmic jazz.



#### 1.4.6 *Summing up*

In contrast to the origin postulated concerning the Vikings, which will be analysed in detail in case study 2, the origin theorised in *Slavernes Slægt* is not of the national kind that binds together the ethno-racial ‘white’ Danes in mythological and gendered ways. Rather it is first and foremost origin of singular subjects who feel connected in their singularities to their families descending from former slaves and Africans. Moreover, the narratives of descendants of enslaved people of African origin are expressed in terms of personal, emotional values, whereas the Viking heritage can be traced using a discourse of ‘rational science’. This representation fits in with a stereotypical binary position of modern thought in which black/white are extended into hot/cold, female/male, emotional/rational, creative/scientific and so on. However, the singular subjectivities hold a potential to emphasise the rhizomatic structures of relation. That is, the deterritorialised connections across borders and boundaries support the argument for a relational ethics, but the binary representation forged on the narratives obscures this potential.

The singular and emotional experience in turn becomes a metaphor for a larger scale connection to the national social imaginary. This social imaginary goes unchallenged, because it is set up by means of personal stories the critique of the nation’s past is diluted. It is not an inherent part of the personal description of genealogy to place blame or responsibility or to discuss the broader historical and political issues involved in colonialism. In the first episode the protagonist, Jensen, regrets the lack of knowledge and acknowledgement in Denmark about the former colonies and the slavery and slave trade experienced there, but she never goes so far as to call for political action. Perhaps Larsen is seeking to establish that political critique through the audio-visual material accompanying the personal narratives as well as through the voice-over reiterating the facts and figures of the Danish slave trade and slavery. This political engagement in correcting the historical account is valuable and it makes an effort to alert Danish viewers to the neglected – or ignored – past. Nevertheless, as Marselis (forthcoming) also notes, and as this section has shown, paradoxically the documentary rehearses common-sense racial stereotypes despite its attempts to do otherwise.



#### 1.4.7 Journalistic narrative

In her analysis of the visual emphasis in Nordic racialisation and in particular in *Slavernes Slægt*, Marselis (forthcoming) complains that ‘the television camera seems fascinated by visual differences [and]...this may be motivated by a wish to represent “visual othering” experienced by the descendants in everyday life, but it inevitably invites the viewer to think in terms of phenotypical differences and thereby participate in a process of racialization’ (Marselis forthcoming: 13). Indeed, the medium of filmed documentary governed by the camera is fascinated with visual difference. It is moreover a part of a journalistic foundation to ‘show, not tell’ the reader, viewer or listener what the story is about. In chapter 2 I argued that this journalistic model is sustained through a belief in journalistic objectivity – ethical as well as epistemological. This is even further emphasised by television, because of the ‘western’ predominance of visual truth claims (Dyer 1997). Secondly, another role the journalistic practice plays in *Slavernes Slægt* is that of archival source. In the second episode, the grandfather of the protagonists, Cornelins, tells his own story through the archival interview and the episode is in that way heavily dependent on journalistic practice. Particular to Cornelins access to a voice is that the voice he assumes is one that praises ‘European civilisation’ while he exoticises his childhood in St Croix. Thirdly, the claim of objectivity is connected to the claim of freedom of expression. In chapter 2 I argued that when objectivity is questioned as a universalising concept, freedom of expression cannot be seen as speaking from an epistemologically objective – and therefore ethically fair – standpoint. Freedom of expression – in terms of whose voice is heard and listened to – has to be challenged through the practices of ‘objective’ reporting in journalism. Later in this case study I return to this challenge in relation to cultural and historical knowledge claims and journalistic cultural memory. I will also develop my argument in relation to liberal democratic concepts of tolerance and equality in case study 3.

The documentary’s discourse on the genealogical lines thus presents two levels; a micro level and macro level. The protagonists in the episodes are responsible only for their own micro level stories, whereas Larsen politically asserts the macro level and the journalistic framing of the stories. But it is on the audio-visual side that the dichotomising effects appear through reiterations of ‘dancing Africans’ or ‘enslaved Africans’ opposed to ‘civilised Europeans’. The macro level discourse seems not to



give nuance to a self-other relation beyond the colour line and importantly beyond the archival historical fixation, to which I will return. Rather, in cooperation with the superficial audio-visual representation of African-Caribbean and Africans in general as either dancing and playing or as oppressed historical figures, the journalistically narrated part of the documentary is trying to exchange one binary and invisible ideology for another that challenges a sort of ignorance or illiteracy. However, unfortunately the proposed literacy is still building on old racial stereotypes. The documentary is thus unable to break the journalistic form given by the Danish-centred accounts and also apparent in historical and contemporary academic work and imaginaries. The stories told of origin and of genealogy in the documentary's four episodes are stories of Danes – the national and cultural rootedness is evident as is the perspective of the audio-visual content.

### 1.5 RE-ENACTING MEMORY: THE NARRATIVES OF EMANCIPATION

At one point in the first episode of *Slavernes Slægt* the macro level – the journalistically framed level of political, cultural and historical aims – breaks from the representation of narration and cover-shots and emerges as a story in itself. It is when Larsen is covering the re-enactment of the emancipation of the Danish slaves in 1848 at the 150th anniversary in 1998. I will investigate the re-enactment because the recordings point toward several layers in which journalistic practice affects and produces cultural memories. It also opens a space to how cultural memories and historical events may be discussed within journalistic practice and subjectivity. Adding to the analysis I will offer a reading of the producer Larsen's written journalistic work about the event, which will elaborate on the construction of the social imaginary in the journalistic discourse of the other. The analysis will moreover address the question of historical memory captured in an event such as the re-enactment and focus on the construction of historical memory in terms of cultural reproduction and as discussed by Adrian Parr (2006) and Rosi Braidotti (2006) drawing on Deleuze and Guattari. This part of the case study will end by re-engaging the previous analysis on origin and genealogy, throwing it into further relief using the questioned concept of history, memory and minority.

#### 1.5.1 *The re-enactment*



The re-enactment of the emancipation of the Danish slaves on the Caribbean islands of St Croix, St Thomas and St John is an annual event and was celebrated on St Croix in 1998 – the 150th anniversary of the emancipation. The celebrations included a re-enactment of the moment when Governor Peter von Scholten, hard-pressed by a burgeoning revolt among the slaves, pronounced the words: ‘You are now free – you have been emancipated!’, without consulting the King of Denmark on this issue first. Von Scholten has passed into the Danish history books for that (speech)act and it was now to be repeated by a Danish actor, Kurt Ravn, on this commemorative occasion. Also present was the journalist Larsen and his camera. Larsen captures the final rehearsal of the re-enactment in Christiansted and follows Ravn to Frederiksted on the succeeding day, where the actual speech was pronounced. The commemoration event is filled with brass band music from Denmark, theatrical scenes from slavery performed by African actors and dancers, and the playing of national anthems. Suddenly the camera shifts to turmoil, which has occurred among the audience. In a flash all the prominent guests, ambassadors and officials, who were attending the ceremony are ushered into their bulletproof cars by their bodyguards. Ravn, the actor portraying von Scholten, seems confused and startled. Both he and African-American gospel singer Etta Cameron, who – it would seem – just happened to be there, are subsequently briefly interviewed by Larsen and express concern to the camera about the Danish role in the slave trade and slavery as well as the tensions between black and white still evident in the post-colonial community. Cameron is shaken, she says, because there ‘could have been a bomb or a pistol’, and Ravn reflects on being on the islands as a white man knowing the atrocities his ancestors committed there.

Who caused the disruption initially proves difficult to discover. It was reported to me<sup>89</sup> that the man causing the turmoil had ridden on his motorbike into the town square where the event took place. But this rather flashy entrée is not captured on film and is not confirmed. When Larsen’s camera captures the man he is already on the dias from where the VIP audience have already been whisked. In the documentary his appearance is subtitled with the name ‘Adelbert Bryant’ and he is possibly a senator – at least that is what Ravn says he was told. However, a google search reveals

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<sup>89</sup> In a personal conversation with Erik Gøbel, historian and senior researcher at the National Archives in Copenhagen, Denmark.



nothing.<sup>90</sup> The three minutes of turmoil in the documentary end with Bryant asserting to the camera and accompanied by supporting cheers that ‘the Danish people must understand that no one in Denmark is [his] friend...until the head of state apologises’. No other explanation is offered to understand Bryant’s agitation and actions. Given this speech it could easily be assumed that Bryant is member of a reparation movement on the islands. But the documentary never explains the situation further than Ravn’s hearsay and Cameron’s fears. The turmoil stands as an event within the event – a hint of a possible political angle. Bryant appears to be a tall African-Caribbean man dressed in distinctive African-inspired clothes and headgear and large sunglasses.

### *1.5.2 Re-reading the re-enactment*

The roughness with which this event and the event within the event orchestrated by Bryant is researched and edited leaves the viewer with no tools to decode the sequence of events. The viewer is left with thinly sketched characters and allusions to powerful stereotypes; a big-looking black and shouting man, a gospel singer who suggests that he could have been violent, even terrorising, and some apologetic stammering from a ‘white’ actor. The connotations are a caricature of the positions in the racial and political tensions in a postcolonial society. However, the sequence does communicate an air of tensions still in place on the islands. It shows anger, fear and remorse personified in the three people commenting on the turmoil. It is an encounter between hegemonic and resisting counter-history. Because of its disruptive function the incident forces the viewer to question the legitimacy of the re-enactment and the terms on which it is performed. It is because of Bryant’s actions that questions arise such as ‘Who in effect emancipated the slaves: Governor von Scholten or the revolting slaves?’ and ‘What are the political implications of the decision to perform the historical event: who gets to speak, who is heard and who is silenced?’. The event within the event ended the entire celebration ceremony and thus generated an opportunity for the observers and participants to take a new political and personal stance. But the documentary does not enable such processes, because of its abrupt shift back to the micro level of the narrative analysed above. The fact that Larsen

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<sup>90</sup> I made a search on ‘Adelbert Bryant’s’ full name; partial name and St Croix; partial name and reparation etc. but only a record of a long-deceased man appeared. It turns out that the documentary editor has misspelt the senator’s name! I will return to this later for now I am following the documentary – misspellings and all.



chose to show this part of his recorded film – a part which has no direct relation to the personal stories of the Danish descendants which he was telling – begs the question; why? In light of the political intentions of Larsen's other journalistic productions, I believe that Larsen wanted to draw attention to the political aspects of the USVI cultural heritage and their connections to Danish historical narratives. I will explore Larsen's project as journalistic and political initiator a bit further below.

The re-enactment in 1998 was a cultural memory reproduced and changed within that repetition of the act of emancipation. In the following I am reading the re-enactment through Danish and USVI articles to gain insight into how journalism and journalist-subjects operate in relation to cultural productions of memories like the re-enactment. As I sketched it out in chapter 2, cultural memories are not merely historical and political events making up a current society. Rather cultural memories are narrated and experienced and create a sensory and productive sense of belonging. In doing so, they draw on cultural myths and legends as, for instance, the role of 'General Buddhoe' in the case of the re-enactment. Journalism's role in these narratives and experiences is the 'acts and products of remembering' in which all – journalists and non-journalists – 'engage to make [sensory and experimental] sense of [our] lives in relation to the lives of others...' (van Dijck 2007: 6) as the above analysis of the documentary *Slavernes Slægt* showed a rather flawed attempt at. This journalistic role in turn blurs the boundaries between the private and the public realms of cultural memories. The journalistic representation of the re-enactment and of Bryant's disruptions can therefore be read as an integral part of the cultural memories generated by the re-enactment.

### 1.5.3 The articles

Larsen wrote two journalistic pieces about the event, in which he elaborates on the political landscape on the islands and on his own role as a journalist (Larsen 1998; 1998a).<sup>91</sup> The first piece, 'Tumult på de vestindiske øer'<sup>92</sup> (1998a), was published in a Danish newspaper two days after the event happened. The article describes the events from Larsen's own physical perspective. It explains where he was standing when it

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<sup>91</sup> The articles were published in 1998 and the documentary was broadcast in 2005. The two journalistic products are therefore not contemporary, though I am using them here to shed light on a further point about journalistic production on the islands in general.

<sup>92</sup> 'Turmoil on the West Indian islands' (my translation).



happened and it details the sequence of events from his outlook post on the wall of Fort Frederik. It describes the ‘rustling’ of the crowd when Bryant approached the stage, the ‘shouting’ and the ‘pushing’ of him and the bodyguards surrounding the invited guests and the violence which occurred. Larsen also writes that the actor Ravn and the gospel singer Cameron join him on the wall, thus giving a view into the context and the environment surrounding the interviews presented in the documentary. It is the journalistic articles by Larsen that present the information the documentary lacks; that the man who interrupted the re-enactment was in fact a local senator with a controversial political agenda, well-known to the Crucians. The article also manages to spell his name correctly (it is Bryan, not Bryant). Bryan is a politician who is working toward introducing ‘the original African values’ to the Virgin Islands and to ‘reserve the islands for people who can trace their roots to before the year 1927’ (Larsen 1998a, my translation).<sup>93</sup>

Bryan originally proposed the idea of a re-enactment of the events of emancipation on the 3rd of July, Larsen writes, but Larsen’s article reveals that Bryan did not intend it to be a celebration of the Danish governor, von Scholten. As Larsen approaches the stage filming Bryan, who is known to detest journalists and never to give interviews (the article says), his supporters point out Larsen to Bryan and makes Bryan aware of the approaching journalist. Bryan sees the opportunity to relay a message to the Danish people, which the documentary repeats and which I reiterated above. But in the article Larsen also quotes Bryan saying: ‘You have nothing to celebrate. It was not von Scholten who emancipated the slaves. It was my ancestors – following general Buddhoe – who took their freedom’ (Larsen 1998a, my translation). The quotes from the written interview with Bryan are thus much more explicit in the discourses presented by the disruption of the event. They introduce the reader to the political and historical tensions on the islands as well as presenting Larsen in a particular role within this tension. Bryan then demands of Larsen to make a formal apology on behalf of the Danish people in the absence of the Danish queen and Danish politicians. Larsen declines and excuses himself with the words: ‘I am a journalist. I am here to collect data and ask questions. I do not represent the official Denmark.’ (Larsen 1998a, my translation). Larsen’s explicit position as ‘journalist’ places him

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<sup>93</sup> This particular year corresponds to the time in history when the USVI population were granted US citizenship, but this is not explained in the documentary.



simultaneously within and outside the cultural tension. I return to the significance of Larsen's positioning as journalist-subject below and make note of how 'objectivity' serves as detachment from the political intention which I believe Larsen to have. Larsen's use of positioning himself within the stories he is telling shows how he is struggling to remain the 'objective' journalist while having a political agenda. It is the same professional tension, I argue, that is present in the three minutes of turmoil in his documentary *Slavernes Slægt*.

The second article, 'Dansk Vestindien: Se, hvad I har gjort'<sup>94</sup> (Larsen 1998), which was published a couple of months after the event had happened, elaborates on the political tensions in the USVI between views respectively emphasising and down-playing the African heritage of the population. Again, Larsen's political interest is apparent and his journalistic 'fair' reporting or 'objectivity' urges him to 'show both sides' of the political story. The article also makes available more details about Larsen's journalistic role as he describes how the police, who are investigating the turmoil and Bryan's role in it, pick Larsen up for questioning. Larsen writes that he, Larsen, is of no help to the police. I will elaborate below on this double role, hinted at here and which is apparent in a cultural analysis of Larsen's work. As previously noted, journalism as well as academic investigations into colonial pasts and presents are always political. Larsen is political in his newspaper articles, but in a covert way – hiding behind (or perhaps bringing in the political through) a notion of journalistic 'objectivity'. Through his claim of being the outsider within, Larsen thus represents a certain representational and political view from a Danish perspective to his Danish readers while staying disembodied in the function as 'journalist'. His claim to the journalistically objective practice in terms of epistemological objectivity allows him to present his political assertions as commonsense and universal.

Before introducing the journalistic subjectivities of these issues I will have a look at how the re-enactment of 1998 was described and experienced in USVI journalism. In this analysis I bring to the fore the interrelation between the journalist-subject's claim to epistemological and ethical objectivity and the notion of freedom of expression. As already implied, Bryan's disruption pointed to some skewed structures in relation to

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<sup>94</sup> 'Danish West Indies: Look what you have done' (my translation)



the ‘objectivity’ of the cultural re-enactment of emancipation which silenced him. Journalistic practice as part of the making of the cultural memory can reinforce the silencing effect or offer Bryan a more or less edited voice. In the following I present the different journalistic approaches to the re-enactment event and Bryan’s disruption within it and I argue for a re-thinking of journalistic cultural memories in light of postcolonial and neo-imperial relations between Denmark, the US and the USVI.

#### 1.5.4 The *Avis* and The Daily News

The USVI has two major newspapers covering the daily news on the islands<sup>95</sup>, *The Virgin Islands Daily News* (*The Daily News*) and *The St Croix Avis* (*The Avis*). *The Daily News* is based in St Thomas, but covers all three islands. It prides itself on its Pulitzer Prize-winning articles and its history of investigative journalism. *The Daily News* focuses on news stories that reveal corruption and debates political issues as well as covering cultural events and topics in special issues and weekend supplements. Crucians seem to think that this St Thomas-based newspaper only covers the negative aspects of St Croix – issues of violence and crime. *The St Croix Avis* or simply *The Avis* is a traditional newspaper still carrying its Danish given name, ‘avis’, meaning ‘newspaper’. The main focus of *The Avis* is the island of St Croix where it is considered the local paper. *The Avis* covers many cultural stories and issues of education and health, though investigative journalism also finds its way into the printed pages. The differences are furthermore expressed in the ownership of the papers; *The Avis* is privately owned whereas *The Daily News* is owned by a corporation.<sup>96</sup>

In the two-day issue, Sunday-Monday July 5-6 in 1998, *The Avis* journalist Jamie Bate writes about the turmoil surrounding the re-enactment that ‘the story of the day was again [like 150 years ago] establishment versus anti-establishment’ (Bate 1998: 1). The establishment in the twentieth century, in which Bate writes, is represented by the governor of the islands, Roy Schneider, and the anti-establishment is represented by Senator Adelbert Bryan. Again, like so many years ago, ‘anti-establishment’ means emphasis on disruptive African culture and virtues and the ‘establishment’ is

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<sup>95</sup> A third ‘paper’ is the internet based *The Source*. But this was not in existence in 1998 when the re-enactment took place and is therefore not included in this description.

<sup>96</sup> Recently *The Daily News* changed hands after a bankruptcy.



left with a 'blank, stunned look on [its] face' (Bate 1998: 2). Also, spectators are left standing in 'unbelieving shock' (Bate 1998: 2). Bate allows the parties in the fight to explain themselves, but nevertheless seems to keep an ironical distance to the subject when describing the sequence of events as follows:

In the early afternoon, the pomp of colonialesque sounds from a brass band added a surreal soundtrack to a program-stopping melee in which Sen. Adelbert Bryan, in full African regalia, wrestled with burly members of Gov. Roy Schneider's security detail. (Bate 1998: 1).

The way Bate insists on the surrealism of the historical adjectives to the events, the 'colonialesque' music and the 'full African regalia', is emphasised later in the story by the description of the audience's surprise and shock and Governor Schneider's 'blank, stunned' facial expression. Simultaneously, Bate recognises the situation as a replica of the past struggles in the sentence reproduced above: '... the story of the day was again establishment versus anti-establishment'. Perhaps, Bate seems to suggest, it is only the style in clothes (African regalia) and music (brass band) that has changed – the issues are still the same. However, a mocking tone seems to find its way into the piece in the way the issues that remain relevant in the community are linked to a long-gone past. Thus, the senator is portrayed as not fitting in when wearing his 'African regalia' and in the same way the surreal brass band music from colonial times seems out of (contemporary) tune, to *The Avis* reporter.

In *The Daily News* Eunice Bedminster reports on the emancipation ceremony in two pieces both featured on the front page and page two under the common heading 'Celebration disrupted'. The first piece, 'Emancipation rolls on', is a reportage from the event which focuses on the bond between past and future and the experiences of this by the audience. The excitement and fear of the Danish slaves 150 years ago seems to be in the air and several people Bedminster talks to remark on this. Additionally, Bedminster reports on the people present, the media covering the events and the parades that were performed. The second piece; 'Bryan storms stage' is the longer of the two. It is a critical piece which already in the second paragraph states that Senator Bryan 'just last week was sentenced to 90 days unsupervised probation on a destruction of property charge'. Meticulously Bedminster accounts for the moves



and thoughts of the police, gives qualified guesses about Bryan's supposed speech topic had he been allowed to speak at the event<sup>97</sup>, Governor Schneider's plans to prosecute the senator for the disruption and the facial expressions of the USVI Delegate to Congress etc. It also becomes clear in this article that the supporters of Senator Bryan are people convinced of the paramount importance of African roots. Bryan is quoted as saying: 'I was born in Frederiksted and I will speak any time I want' (Bedminster 1998: 2). The emphasis placed by Bryan on his place of birth goes hand in hand with a general debate in the community especially in St Croix in which being '*ban'ya*' affords a certain (street) credibility to a person. Freedom of speech is connected to the privilege that follows local heritage. Moreover, supporters express strong concerns that Senator Bryan was not allowed to speak, because 'He represents us all. The other colors up there don't mean anything to us.' (Bedminster 1998: 2).

However, at the end of the piece, Bedminster somewhat tellingly returns to the issue of the senator's crime sheet in the third-last paragraph of the piece:

Bryan, who has a history of trouble with the law and has frequently disrupted Senate meetings, was found guilty of destruction of property in February for smashing *Daily News* photographer Steve Rockstein's camera during Nov. 7, 1996, Senate meeting. (Bedminster 1998:2)

In this quote *The Daily News* steps into the ring and it becomes apparent that the newspaper may have a dispute with Senator Bryan outside the realm of the emancipation event. This paragraph cannot help but affect the perception of the article and its claims, I think, because it makes the constructed journalistic objectivity apparent to the readers. Both *The Avis* and *The Daily News* followed the controversy of Senator Bryan for the next few days, but neither seemed to find a resolution to the dispute. The coverage in the USVI news can moreover be understood in relation to small-town communities in which everybody knows everybody: less explanation is needed. However, news criteria would still have to be up to a certain standard.

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<sup>97</sup> Most likely the article states he would have emphasised the absence of General Buddhoe and the superfluous use of the character Gov. Peter von Scholten. – This concurs with Larsen's articles.



The articles in the two USVI newspapers differ markedly from the Danish in that they are part of a regular daily news-flow and not a particular ‘foreign report’ piece. This means that the journalists who are writing do not seem to focus so much on having to justify their interest in this issue or call on the identification of the viewer. Larsen, on the other hand, struggles to make the issue of concern to Denmark. Both USVI papers focus on the future-present continuum. *The Avis*, keeping an ironic distance, identifies a dissonance in the representation of the cultural-historical issues on the contemporary political scene, whereas the core of the debate may be the same. *The Daily News*, in the article ‘Emancipation rolls on’, accentuates the excitement and the feeling of coherence and contingency expressed by the audience to the event and the citizens of USVI. This is a less explicit political assertion than the one portrayed in *The Avis*. To *The Daily News* reporter it would seem that politically the issues are torn and debated, but when it comes to the historical presence of a common past the USVIs are united. It follows that *The Daily News* split the story in two; one that reports on the events and one that focuses on the disruption by Senator Bryan.

As already hinted at, the journalist’s political and perhaps personal interests become apparent throughout the pieces. But the USVI journalists are not explicitly present in their articles in the same way that Larsen puts his own life in his stories. I would contend that this is because of the abovementioned need for identification which is readily at hand to the USVI journalists’ readers but not quite as easily engaged when it comes to Danish readers of USVI news. I want to discuss further the situation of the journalistic practice in the next section. I do this through a closer reading of Larsen using the categories of the *professional* and the *personal* journalistic practices developed in chapter 2. The categories make a conversation possible that will illuminate issues of journalistic subjectivity, ‘objectivity’ and un-biased reporting in the articles on the re-enactment. In short, questions of journalistic politics of positioning are at stake. I will take this conversation as my starting point in the following discussion of history, memory and archives.

## 1.6 THE JOURNALIST

The journalistic genre used by Larsen (1998; 1998a) in the articles is explicitly personal in its perspective, but not in the analyses. We are informed about his



daughter's birthday, where he is standing filming and who is approaching him, but not about how he feels when Bryan stares him down demanding a formal apology on behalf of the Danish people or about his political convictions. It is not a return to the new journalism or gonzo-journalism of the 1960s and 1970s<sup>98</sup>, but it is not strictly 'un-biased' news reporting either. Larsen is very present in the articles, but he is present as a *journalist*. He is taking the position of a journalist witnessing, interrogating and mediating. In this sense he is engaging the tools of 'objective' news reporting of the modern kind – what Muhlmann (2008) calls the *unifying* function of journalism. Larsen is the *witness-ambassador*, who presents himself as a witness legitimated by a community that justifies his observations. Larsen is moreover embodying the credos of journalistic *accuracy*, *objectivity* and *fairness* when he makes himself visible to the reader and represents himself as a 'truth-seeking' journalist. Of course, he is also the editor of the piece and to some extent his viewpoint must necessarily be biased. But it is on the side of journalism and therefore inherently 'objective' and 'fair'. Whereas Larsen's documentary *Slavernes Slægt* (2005) leaves the investigative role to the protagonists of the individual episodes, the articles are Larsen-the-journalist's narratives. 'I am [a] journalist'<sup>99</sup> Larsen insists in his encounter with Bryan. 'I am not representing the *official* Denmark' (my emphasis), but he is representing his readers – his Danish readers. Larsen-the-journalist is saying 'we' when he is saying 'I' (Muhlmann 2008: 23). But it is a 'we' detached from the official Denmark. I will argue that because Larsen places himself as an object in the story as Larsen-the-journalist, he is able to present himself as being singular without being subjective. He is perceived as one of 'us' – he represents the reader completely. Larsen can then be biased, but journalistically balanced. It is because of journalism's practice-oriented interest in *showing* the story rather than *telling* it that the recognisable Larsen-the-object of the story becomes eligible for 'objective' reporting – by Larsen-the-journalist.

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<sup>98</sup> Gonzo journalism is understood as a subjective journalism balancing between fiction and fact. It was popularised by Hunter S. Thomson who wrote the script to the film about himself and his work: *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* by Terry Gilliam (1999), starring Johnny Depp and Benicio del Toro.

<sup>99</sup> The sentence 'Jeg er journalist' [I am journalist] leaves out the indefinite article 'a', which makes sense in Danish (though 'Jeg er en journalist' [I am a journalist] is also syntactically correct). Significantly Larsen is not using the article, thereby emphasising his one-ness with the trade of journalism.



Larsen's position as Larsen-the-journalist allows him the ability to occupy at will a position in proximity to or at a distance from the events and his political interest. Larsen is ambiguous regarding his accountability for his political and journalistic practice. He presents his viewers and readers with political aspects of USVI and Danish historical and current relations but his journalistic attachments to the craftsmanship and to the belief in 'objectivity' forbids him to assume accountability for this presentation. The tension which emerges from Larsen's work is therefore not only a political tension on the islands but also a journalistic tension in the practice of Larsen's journalism.

### *1.6.1 Politics of objectivity in the re-enactment*

Larsen's Danish articles add to the analysis a context and a view of the working journalist, which promotes a sympathetic *unified* readership under the heading of 'objectivity'. In the light of the categories of journalistic relation to objectivity, Larsen-the-journalist places himself explicitly in the category of the *professional* journalist (see chapter 2). This move, as I suggest above, hides the fact that this role-playing affords a political unification of the readers behind Larsen's stand. There are two points to this position. Firstly, when Larsen is arguing something as a private person the reader may agree or disagree, but when he argues as Larsen-the-journalist his argument is given the weight of major journalistic and democratic pillars; objectivity and freedom of speech – and who dares disagree with that?<sup>100</sup> Secondly, Larsen's explicit personal scenery in the articles – his daughter's birthday etc. – allows the reader to identify with Larsen; he is 'us'. Thus, the journalistic position allows for a conflation of 'us' with 'objectivity'. The journalism conducted in the USVI by *The Avis* and *The Daily News* in 1998 draws on different political discourses, of course. This is because of the political and public reality surrounding the journalists and the readers – that is, their cultural embeddedness. The journalists however also draw on other paradigms, no less political than Larsen's. Bate (*The Avis*) uses ironical distance to suggest an embarrassed attitude towards USVI petty politics whereas Bedminster (*The Daily News*) – having the benefit of two separate articles –

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<sup>100</sup> John Durham Peters (2005) makes a similar argument of the liberal democratic necessity of opposing censorship and discusses how opposing censorship simultaneously constructs a personal performance of higher and rationally enlightened positioning. Opposing censorship – as I will discuss in case study 3 – allows for a construction of the other as emotionally charged and rationally challenged.



focuses both on the personal meaning of the emancipation re-enactment and the way it brings the community together, and on the political turmoil that divides the people and which discredits Bryan. These are both opinions presented as objective and professional journalism. The two *Daily News* articles clearly show that the re-enactment is a personal as well as a political event because of the journalistic cultural memory being connected to it. The two categories of journalistic relations to objectivity produce different kinds of journalism, which I will analyse further below in reference to the culturally and archival historical narration of the USVI.

The documentary *Slavernes Slægt* presents the turmoil relating to the disrupting manner of Senator Adelbert Bryan in an abrupt and limited way. This representation leaves the viewer with a sense of chaos and with no tools to interpret the situation that faces them on the screen. The documentary merely portrays a caricature of the political situation on the islands with a sketchy possibility of enabling new processes of thoughts about the relations of Denmark and St. Croix in particular and the USVI in general. The context in which the event could be seen is provided by Larsen in the articles, which were published seven years prior to the broadcasting of the documentary on Danish television. These articles, though unhelpful to the viewers because of the time frame, explain political and cultural ideas and processes at work in the three minutes of turmoil presented. However, because it is not presented within the documentary, the viewer lacks tools to understand the event and furthermore the documentary inhibits the possibility of learning more, because of the misspelling of the senator's name.<sup>101</sup>

### 1.6.2 Re-writing the re-enactment

In the analysis above I have detected several layers of cultural, political and historical accounts of the relation between Danish and USVI social imaginaries and cultural memories. The accounts presented in the documentary are expressed in different overlapping genres of journalistic narratives and discourses; the personal genealogical accounts, the journalistically narrated historical accounts, the audio-visual

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<sup>101</sup> It is a bit of a mystery to me why Larsen misspells Bryan's name in the documentary. The mistake is repeated in the following documentary *Slavernes Spor* but not in the newspaper articles. This could mean that someone other than Larsen has edited the documentaries and Larsen has not cared to check the result. If it is Larsen's own doing it leaves me wondering about his carelessness towards Bryan. Nevertheless, the misspelling makes it practically difficult to pursue an interest in the political aspects of the documentary.



representations and the re-enactment. They all present a version of a historical reality and the colonial past and its connection to the present and so they call upon a reading and understanding of history in relation to political minorities and historical oppression. The USVI articles following the re-enactment and commemoration day made available another point of view in which the journalistic role was less explicit. However, political agendas were looming underneath and popped up in the angles put on the stories. The journalistic reiteration of past-future, which seems so readily at hand in the USVI journalism, was lacking in the Danish coverage – but I will return to this issue below.

### *1.6.3 Whose freedom, whose speech?*

Senator Bryan's disruption of the re-enactment event brought to light the dominant representation of the historical relation between Denmark and the USVI on two levels; firstly, it brought about a critique of the arrangement of the event, and secondly, it questioned the very historical assumptions on which the event was established. Bryan's interruption made it lucid that the event of re-enactment of the emancipation of the Crucian slaves by Danish Governor von Scholten is re-enactment of the archival knowledge – the hegemonic and Euro-centric history-writing. Recapturing what I mentioned earlier on in this chapter, librarian archivist and researcher Jeanette Bastian (2003) argues for two kinds of historical memory; the archival knowledge, which is documenting and descriptive, and the cultural productive knowledge, which is based on experience. A community like the USVI is prone to emphasise the experienced memory rather than the descriptive, because of its lack of access to archival possessions and knowledge (Bastian 2003). That sort of cultural knowledge, which holds myths and legends, oral and performative (re)production as foundational for the existence of the culture's history, has to be continuously defended against the archival and written knowledge figuring in Danish official documents, which only Danish-speaking people – the former colonisers – have access to, Bastian contends.

### *1.6.4 The ballad of Adelbert Bryan*

I want to mirror Bastian's two historical accounts in the journalistic representations of cultural events. What was emphasised in the journalistic articles from 1998; the experienced history or the documented? And how is that binary reflected in



journalistic concepts like freedom of speech and objectivity? Might the journalists learn from Adelbert Bryan's intervention and contention that he has a right to speak – more so than 'the other colours' – because he is Crucian? It seems fair to say that Senator Bryan's view as it is presented here is both locally and racially biased in the sense that he argues for political priority to be given to people of Crucian and African descent and because he claims a kind of Crucian authenticity. However his position raises the question already mentioned above: What are the political implications of the decision to perform the historical event in the way it was done?: Who got to speak, who was heard and who was silenced? Put in journalistic terms the question is about how 'objective' the representation of this particular historical event is and if there are degrees of 'freedom of speech' involved in a less than 'objective' representation?

The analysis above has shown that Adelbert Bryan was portrayed and described as aggressive, as ridiculous and as a criminal, on top of which the quotes underlined the irrationality of his account. Senator Bryan is 'the madman' contrasted to the civilisation standing in shock and awe over the wildness of his behaviour. His portrait sets up an opposition between him and the reader in which this element of disorder needs to be suppressed in order to develop 'reason' (Foucault 1989). Bryan disrupts order with the ambivalence he produces (Baumann 1991). Bryan is black and he speaks for the case of the African descendants in St Croix. Governor Roy Schneider is also black – as is more than 80% of the USVI population – however; within the journalistic narrative he is placed on the side of the 'establishment' and order and thus on the side of the white governor before him, von Scholten. In the community of the USVI it is not so much a question of colour as it is a question of belonging – it's a question of 'having been there twenty years and lived through at least one major hurricane'<sup>102</sup> or being '*ban'ya*'. The narrative structures of journalistic cultural memories calling for identification thus assume an important position and the personal and political positions of the journalist-subjects become pivotal.

If Bryan constitutes 'racial' division, then *The Daily News* reporter, Bedminster (1998), writes about the future, present and past coinciding in the minds and hearts of

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<sup>102</sup> Bill Kossler made this questionable remark during an interview about his journalistic work in the territories. Kossler is white, male and in his forties. He is born, raised and has been working for most of his life in 'continental' US.



the audience in a unifying – or perhaps post-racial – context and does not mention the particulars of race, gender, ethnic origin and class. In this way Bedminster may claim an ‘objective’ position and thus that she is speaking for all USVI citizens and allowing freedom of speech for all. However, in feminist tradition this would be a mistake. Feminist theorists have argued for ‘situated knowledges’ (Haraway 1991) and ‘strong objectivity’ (Harding 1993) stemming from an acknowledgement of particularities. In chapter 1 I connected these theories to the philosophical tradition of phenomenology, in which emphasis in knowledge production is placed on sensorial experience and embodiedness. Both feminist and ‘race’ scholars have underscored the importance of embodied differences of experience. Feminist theorists argue that in order to understand and critique the foundations of a given knowledge claim one has to understand and be able to reflect on one’s own particularities and situatedness. Reflexiveness is thus pivotal to engaging in a ‘strong objectivity’ which is rooted in the scientists’ (and I argue the journalists’) understanding of their own point of departure. This means that particularities such as gender, ethnic origin and ‘race’ become crucial to ‘objectivity’ – without an acknowledgement of difference and diversities there is no ‘objectivity’, the feminist theorists argue. ‘Race’ scholars in particular have developed theories about the interpellating force of visual difference. The experience of looking different from the ‘white’ norm and the double consciousness (DuBois) or third-person experiences (Fanon) this perception enhances creates a certain position from where the world is viewed and known. Feminist ethnographer Gloria Wekker (2006) develops a radical relation against objectivity when she suggests that ‘methodology provides information about the various ways in which one locates oneself – psychologically, socially, linguistically, geographically, epistemologically, and sexually – to be exposed to experience in a culture’ (Wekker 2006:4). Wekker’s ‘inverted model’ allows her to take upon herself an active and generative role in her research on female Afro-Surinamese sexuality. Wekker’s implication in her research is total in the sense that she acknowledges that her own methodological position – as ‘an Afro-Surinamese anthropologist who loves women’ (Wekker 2006:4) and who is romantically involved with the main informant of her research – calls attention to the always implicated and complicit position of the researcher. Journalist-subjects may find inspiration in Wekker’s conceptualisation of positionality by bearing in mind the embodiedness and embeddedness of anyone who tries to tell another subject’s story.



Wekker's positionality draws the concept of 'objectivity' into question and helps deconstruct the concept. In a complementary move, Gayatri Spivak (1988) questions whether the 'subaltern' can speak and thereby she challenges the 'western' researchers who represent the 'subaltern' in various studies. Researchers as well as journalist-subjects continuously struggle with the consequences of their findings and their writings. How does a researcher or a journalist-subject avoid creating the problem which s/he is uncovering? How does the anthropologist avoid presenting their informants – the 'subaltern' – as other? And how does the journalist-subject avoid belittling or demonising their object of information? Bedminster (1998) universalised the USVI public implicitly against the disorderly figure of Bryan. Bedminster's journalistic assumption was that 'western' journalistic objectivity speaks for all in equal representation and diversity if differences are not taken into account. By giving voice to the cultural and historical re-enactments and productions, journalists are allowing several accounts of history to be heard. However, Spivak's critique of 'western' academics can be levelled at 'western' journalists as well; that is, the assumption of African collectivity in the USVI territories represented through politicians such as Senator Bryan and the re-enactments become a limited and forced homogeneous account of a heterogeneous and extremely diverse reality of a diasporic and post-colonial population. The fact that a majority of USVI journalists are in fact born, raised and trained in the continental US makes this critique even more pertinent. Taking Wekker's position and regarding the journalist-subject's presence and agency as constituting of (the future of) journalistic practice and production may be overstepping the mark, but a qualified reflection upon Wekker's positionality should be advised.

Several journalistic accounts have been given about what happened during the scheduled re-enactment of the 1848 emancipation in 1998. All of these have displayed political or social bias – that is, they have all said more than what was written. In this case study I am trying to draw out the implicit cultural and historical assumptions of the journalistic statements. Though there are different versions the journalistic practices seem to reproduce an account based on universal objectivity, which is taken to mean to be undifferentiated and which feminist theorists have exposed as a disembodied and disembedded 'god-trick'. The USVI constitute a postcolonial



community of diasporic majority and the islands are presently under the jurisdiction of the US as well as being culturally, historically, geographically and in terms of migration within the population, a part of the Caribbean island chain. These intrinsic diversities do not mean, however, that the journalistic representation of the culture there is beyond the reach of the paradigm of modernity. Feminist, 'race' and postcolonial theories – and theories of embodied and embedded journalistic practice and subjectivities – therefore offer new ways of analysing the tensions and questions involved in USVI and Danish journalism about the historical and cultural representations in the USVI territories. This does not have to take the form of an elaborate in-depth anthropological study in which the journalist-subjects not only reflect on their complicity in the story but create the story through it. Rather the reflection and acknowledgement of the journalist-subject's positionality may guide the journalistic knowledge claim and allow for an ethical response.

In the following I will discuss the claim of historical representation in the re-enactment with ideas of memory and history presented earlier through the Deleuzian notion of history as 'singular memory'. I will moreover discuss how this Deleuzian – European-philosophical – concept relates to the cultural memory that the USVI rely on in the absence of their archives.

#### *1.6.5 History and memory*

Bryan's interruption made it apparent that the event of re-enactment of emancipation given to the Crucian slaves by the Danish Governor von Scholten is not only a re-enactment based on the archival, white and Euro-centric knowledge claim, but also a re-enactment of the Deleuzian concept of 'History' with a capital H. It follows the Danish official archives and documents and is established on a European understanding of what happened. This History rejects the event as becoming – that is, rather than producing difference in repetition it reproduces a 'state of domination' which is majoritarian and the event as living matter avoids the fixation, which is the effect of historicisation. History and so also the repetitive re-enactment reterritorialises that which is deterritorialised and so functions on the molar level. History is the discourse – (re)constituted and (re)produced continually by, for example, journalism – that *unifies* under the heading of the God-trick; the claim of 'objectivity' under which factual headline we may all agree and be one whole. It is in this way a pivotal part of



the social imaginary. Instead of employing the fixating concept of History, Deleuze and Guattari suggest using memory as a tool of re-creating the past in lines of flight – deterritorialised – and singular. Though the re-enactment and commemoration celebrated by Crucians are exactly memory based on experience, Bastian argues, this is not enough following the Deleuzian concept of singular memory.

In chapter 2 I introduced Adrian Parr's (2006) reading of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of memory. Memory, she writes, can be divided into two: reterritorialisation in which a re-enactment of History functions as a fixing of an event. This History 'monumentalize[s] the past' when history is stated as an inherent not created value. It is the case of the Crucian re-enactment which I reiterated above. The event of re-enactment is a part of a punctual system of History – that is, a majoritarian reterritorialisation. The second notion of memory (Parr 2006: 130), which Parr deduces from Deleuze and Guattari's work and which I presented in chapter 2, is 'singular memory'. 'Singular memory' or memory as ahistorical force (minoritarian) is concerned with 'history of desire-production' (Parr 2006: 135). Deleuze and Guattari emphasise the creative and productive notion of desire. In chapter 2 I connected this creative force of *becoming* to Williams's (2005) idea of production as an on-going process and it is in turn connected to repetition in terms of *difference* (producing difference in repetition). This means that memory is not inherently historical or related to past events, but presupposes a future. The creative productive dimension of desire in repetition 'contains within a seed for a creative dimension to memory', Parr writes. The Deleuzian conceptualisation links memory to imagination. Memory plays a role in the reinvention of the self. It is not an imagining of the self as other (Scarry 1996), this notion merely resets the binary of self/other, but an imaginative and creatively productive reinvention of the self 'on the basis of what you hope you could become' (Braidotti 2006: 168). It is about creating or experiencing the virtual possibilities that will have been. It is the future perfect tense, which dissolves the past and the future in the remembering of the non-unitary self. It is a way of not forgetting history and of knowing destiny, to paraphrase Marley.

Marley's term 'destiny' is important here because destiny can be seen as the future perfect tense, that which will have been. Knowledge produced through remembering history is a creative production and re-invention of the (future) self. Thus, cultural



memory of legends and myths and songs is not enough. A creative imagining and productive will to allow change to occur is necessary.<sup>103</sup>

#### *1.6.6 Re-membering the re-enactment*

From the above it follows that rather than representing history as majoritarian event, memory or repetition of history needs to question the underlying assumptions of the representation and become *minoritarian*. Thus the turmoil occurring in relation to the 150th anniversary of the emancipation of the Danish slaves can be seen as a disruption and a questioning of the re-enactment and the History it was repeating. The scare of the disruptiveness of Bryan, causing turmoil, throws into relief the consumerism of the re-enactment and the celebrations. His perceived aggressiveness brought forth the complicity of the white colonisers (whose admirable (speech)act of emancipation was on display and in focus) and made apparent ‘the comfort found in repressing its own complicity’ (Parr 2006: 134) as well as exposing it to be neo-colonialist and imperialist. The turmoil or disruption, I think, may present a challenge to the representation in that it exposes it as a construction, which in turn is underlined by the Danish actor’s remark that he will ‘probably not be going on stage today...’. It is not that Bryan’s political agenda ‘wins’ over the agenda set for the re-enactment event, rather the disruption brings about the possibility of creating a new historical beginning that signals new ways of remembering and writing history (Parr 2006: 142).

Through encounters with others, processes occur and as mentioned above, the disruption opened up potential new spaces for interpreting the event. But did it enable a process of possible *becoming* (Deleuze and Guattari) or did it reposition the binary of oppression and hegemony? The encounter of the event in the event as it was abruptly presented in the documentary was aggressive and frightening, and I argue that the un-contextualised aggression blocked the possibility of an affirmative generated *becoming*. Instead the aggression forced a dialectic positioning of ‘us’ and ‘them’ which denied the viewer a chance for empathy or ethical response – in contrast, ‘[t]he nomadic subject thus engages with his or her external others in a constructive, “symbiotic” block of becoming, which bypasses dialectical interaction’ (Braidotti 2002: 119). Moreover, Bryan underscores the dichotomy of ‘us’ and ‘them’

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<sup>103</sup> This is obviously not the same use of the term and the concept of destiny which Amartya Sen (2006) critiques.



and reconstitutes a structure which he holds in common with the Historical view. Bryan calls on an identity-based approach to historical accounts – an approach which re-stabilises or fixates what his intervention into the re-enactment event de-stabilised. Bryan exchanges History for another History – but a History nonetheless – when he insists on a closed experience of slavery generating a binary of two respectively reciprocal entities. As discussed throughout chapter 1, I believe identity politics to be limiting the dialogues and relations between people in that it denies access to a common humanity of what might be termed singular relations. It also re-positions memory in the reterritorialising realm of History and common social imaginary.

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If both the genealogical archival accounts and the memory-driven and legend-based accounts of history are simply re-territorialising and majoritarian and what is suggested is rather creative imaginings and productions of re-inventions, how may journalism enable another form of memory production devoid of binaries and negative drives? How may the binary of post-colonial politics and representations be challenged by and through journalism-becoming-minoritarian? A journalistic practice that stays aware of the constant repositioning of journalistic production and journalistic subjectivity may be part of an answer. I suggest in chapter 2 that the journalist-subject prevents a reterritorialisation in that s/he would enable a constant re-negotiation and re-positioning in relation to the community and the topic of the journalism produced. This might be by means of a reworking of cosmopolitan journalistic subjectivity, which consists of a displacement and an estrangement from cultural and political hegemony while acknowledging that the journalist-subject always remains a part of this hegemony. Because of the singular presence of journalist-subjects in the field the re-negotiations and re-positioning are ethical relations as described in the first three chapters, and to which I return in the conclusion to this dissertation.

## 1.7 CONCLUSION

The fixity of identity-based understandings of the social imaginary is prevalent in the documentary *Slavernes Slægt* (Larsen 2005). Relations across generations, continents and historical realities are understood to be the foundation of personal as well as



national identity. Larsen (implicitly and sheltered by the practices of journalism and of journalistic practice) argues that ‘we’ as Danes need to reject<sup>104</sup> the Danish historical narrative about the colonial past in order to imagine ourselves as the other and thus change our relation to others and to act in solidarity and moral responsibility in the future. The project is noteworthy and appreciated, but it does not manage to straddle the gap between the experience or reality of the Crucian and the Danish conception and perception of social imaginaries and historical reproductions. It stays within an idea of dialectic postcolonial relations. The two-headed memory of archives and legends is too simplistic and reductionist in this context and runs the risk of essentialising yet another European/colonial binary. This means that the power relations between (former) coloniser and colonised remain the same and are seen as natural and fixed. The naturalisation and fixity strips the subject of responsibility and thus denies the subject an opportunity to act and assume accountability for historical and current cultural memory productions. Moreover, the identity-ridden accounts of genealogical and historical accountability merely express fixed and punctual entities making up History, because they are based on limited archival knowledge-power relations (Bastian 2003). What is needed instead is a multilayered notion of power and relations, so that (journalistic) cultural memories may change the world and perception of interrelationships which in turn may make a call for affirmative journalism of relation and ethical accountability.

The Deleuzian nomadism of memory emphasises the processes in-between the historical events and experiences. ‘The coherence of this system is the result of the affinity and empathy that allowed for the preliminary selection to be made in the first place, resulting in storage of the data in or as memory’ (Braidotti 2006: 172) and if so, then it is important to acknowledge the points of remembrance available. If we want the social imaginary to change through a re-definition of common cultural memory of the past or by nuancing and diversifying the historical accounts, we need to make available alternative ways of empathising, which are not based on citations of texts as clumps of factual events ready for re-enactment, but to think of text as ‘a relay point *between* different moments in space and time’ (Braidotti 2006: 171, my emphasis)

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<sup>104</sup> Rather than re-inventing the historical tradition (Hobsbawm 1983), which to some extent would deconstruct the identity politics, Larsen argues for a replacement of the old narrative with an already constituted other.



connected to a rhizomatic thinking process.<sup>105</sup> Such a nomadic methodology sees memory as process connected to creative productions. It redefines history from a linear progressing account of past events to a rhizomatic, non-unitary and ethical understanding of remembrance embodied and embedded in (journalistic) subjectivities. It also redefines inter-relations accordingly – as a web of multiple co-constructions of affirmative forms of mutual specification by subjects that are complex and in-process.

### *1.7.1 Journalistic experimentation*

A way of engaging with this kind of ‘Deleuzian journalism’ or ‘cosmo-journalism’ – as I termed it in chapter 3 – follows the path of experimentation. I suggest a journalistic practice which aims at breaking the form. This enables new content and, more than that, the form can be challenged through an awareness of the journalist as subject. Experiencing the new realities as a journalist-subject makes it possible to create new affirmative cultural – singular – memories. This journalistic action will throw into relief the notions of ‘objectivity’ and ‘freedom of expression’ which in turn engages the readers, viewers and listeners to journalistic production, because the news changes and because ‘objectivity’ is no longer pretended and therefore the question of whose voices are heard becomes a topic for the general public. Involving the public is of course important because it is the way for journalism to live up to the ideals of giving opportunity to and possibility of active and affirmative citizenship. In my view the journalistic possibility of creating an affirmative journalistic production embodied in the journalistic subject position could be exemplified through forging relations between journalist-subjects in Denmark and in the USVI. I will return to this option in the general conclusion.

Finally, I find it pivotal to allow students of journalism to learn about colonial relations, cultural implications, Danish complicity and power positions in order to return the ethical accountability to the journalist-subject. Though many journalism departments and schools rightly emphasise political theory and sociology as the foundation for journalistic knowledge, this cannot sustain journalism in an age in which political relations are bound up with complex, mobile and interdependent

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<sup>105</sup> It could be speculated that perhaps the surreal dissonance detected by *The Avis* reporter, Bate (2008), is exactly the memory production of St Croix that day.



relations of cultural, religious, historical and mediated memories. Moreover, the blogosphere, civic journalism, social networks and broadcasting sites like YouTube will not allow ignorance and national and cultural one-track ways of thinking. The commonsensical construction of homogeneity and ‘whiteness’ in the Danish – and generally Nordic – public and mediated discourse will be examined further in the next case study through a semiotic and discursive analysis of the iconic ‘white’ masculinity of the Viking. The ‘white’, male warrior Viking is in the media at large continuously connected to a stable Scandinavian gene pool, cultural entrepreneurship and masculinity. The next case study presents a close reading of the connotative level of this unquestioned use of the Viking iconography and moreover relates it to its genealogical implications.



## CASE STUDY 2:

### 2.0 SITUATING THE VIKINGS AND NORDIC (POST)COLONIALISM

My Danish passport is like many other passports held by citizens of the European Union: beetroot-coloured and pocket-sized. Flipping the first page of my passport, however, reveals a picture unique to passports of Danish citizens. It is a picture of Jesus Christ crucified – stretching his arms rigidly to the sides of the cross, though the cross is missing and instead the figure is surrounded by and wrapped in swirling patterns. It is a reproduction of a detail from one of the oldest runic stones in Denmark raised by King Harald Bluetooth around the year 1000 CE in memory of his parents, and his self-proclaimed accomplishment of converting the Danes to Christianity. The runic stone can be seen to signal the beginning of the end of the Viking era in Danish history. However, pictured on the flipside of my beetroot-coloured booklet of nationality, it signals moreover a Christian national origin as well as calling upon Nordic cultural memory, historical belonging and identification. This case study focuses on the mediated insistence on Scandinavian ‘white’ identity and its connection to ‘western’ ‘globalised’ (re)production and sustainment of this identity. Before I embark on the analysis I want to dwell on the context of the Scandinavian<sup>106</sup> cultural non-memories of the colonial past because of its often unknown status and because of its complexities relating to ‘race’, gender and ‘whiteness’.

The myth of origin in my passport is twofold: it speaks of the conception of (Danish) man through Christian genesis. It is a story of becoming European and eventually ‘enlightened’ and ‘civilised’ along with the rest of Europe. This narrative re-surfaces today in European debates about wearing of the Moslem *niqab* and *hijab* and it figured prominently in the discourses surrounding the publication of twelve cartoons in a Danish newspaper in 2005, which developed within a dynamic relationship between the regionally specific cultural memory and the ideological narrative of the European Enlightenment. I address the cartoons controversy in the last case study of this dissertation. The myth of origin also speaks of what came before ‘European civilisation’: the Viking age, overseen by the gods Odin and Thor, and Valhalla

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<sup>106</sup> I am using ‘Scandinavia’ and ‘Nordic’ interchangeably although Scandinavia often only connotes Denmark, Sweden and Norway – and sometimes Finland and Iceland. The Nordic countries encompass Denmark, the Danish territories, Norway, Sweden, and Finland, the Finnish territories and Iceland. The boundaries for the cultural production of common memories are fluid throughout the Nordic region.



awaiting the Vikings who died in battle (for which there were plenty of opportunities). It speaks of the era in which the Vikings were raiding, plundering and taking colonial possessions. Both origins are contained within my beetroot-coloured booklet of citizenship as a Danish citizen of the European Union. It is not explicitly about biological origin but rather about cultural and historical origin, and it categorises me in terms of belonging to the nation-state and a certain historically marked territory. 'Territory and indeed nature itself are being engaged as a means to define citizenship and the forms of rootedness that compose national solidarity and cohesion' (Gilroy 2004a: 111). The picture on the flipside of my passport represents a gendered, racialised and Christian rendition of my Viking origin. Christ chiselled in stone and surrounded by runic patterns sustains a ready conflation of mythology (the Viking who crafted the stone) and divinity (the depicted crucified Christ) in a uniquely Scandinavian mode.

The tropes linked to Viking 'whiteness' are constructed in opposition to those linked, for example, to African-Americans, Asian Americans and Native Americans. Conferences and projects on the Caribbean colonial past have been realised in Scandinavia recently following the commemoration of the emancipation of enslaved Africans in the Danish colonies and the journalistic endeavours on the human legacy of the former Danish colonies and practices of slavery in the Caribbean (Larsen 2005). However, in case study 1 I showed that despite anti-racist intentions the Nordic discourse on 'race' and ethnic minorities is challenged by the impenetrable silence surrounding the history of Danish colonialism – in the North as well as in the Caribbean, Africa and East India.<sup>107</sup> The connections and interactions between the categories of 'white' and 'blackened' identities are played out differently in Scandinavian colonial history as large parts of the Nordic region were under Danish colonial rule for centuries. One of the oldest and longest lasting colonial possessions of Denmark is Iceland, which 'whitened' itself despite its colonised position by constructing a journalistic discursive identification with the continental European colonisers in Africa in the nineteenth century (Loftsdóttir forthcoming). In this way the Icelanders dispatched of their own 'blackened' identities as colonised subjects of

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<sup>107</sup> In case study 1 I dealt only with the Caribbean colonies, the present-day US Virgin Islands, and their historical and human connection to Denmark and Danish history.



Denmark. The Icelandic emancipation from Danish colonial rule<sup>108</sup> was moreover symbolically gendered. Icelandic nationalists identified the particular Icelandishness to be founded in the nature of the country's 'maternal' body, which was distinctly different from the Danes, represented by the Danish king who was referred to as the 'father' (Björnsdóttir 1998). By turning the colonised and feminised identity into an empowerment of the national imaginary, the Icelandic discourse on 'race' was intermixed with the discourse on colonisation and gender. Journalistic and public discourses today rarely touch upon issues which bring attention to the Nordic 'whiteness' such as those mentioned above and also Nordic phrenology and racial hygiene in Lapland<sup>109</sup>, displacements of Greenlandic children away from their parents to foster care in Denmark<sup>110</sup>, or the connection of Viking imaginary and iconography to Nazi Germany (Dyer 1997). While the scholarship of critical 'whiteness' introduced in chapter 1 is limited and scarcely visible in Nordic academic writing, the field of postcolonial theory, taking the Nordic colonial history as its object of analysis, has slowly emerged as of the beginning of this century (Hauge 2001, Jóhannsson 2001). The question of 'whiteness' within the field which calls for analyses of symbolic 'blackening' and 'whitening' of peoples as briefly sketched out above is even less explored (Loftsdóttir 2002, and forthcoming). Both Loftsdóttir (forthcoming) and Jóhannsson (2001) respectively within the anthropological and literary field of studies talk of the Icelandic-Danish connection as bearing resemblance to the Orientalism of which Said (1979) spoke, though the colour-coding of the Icelandic people is symbolic rather than visual.

The academic fields mentioned above in which these investigations do take place are modelled mainly on US and UK scholarly frameworks in literature and anthropology. Yet, early attempts at building a new awareness through interdisciplinary studies and projects such as *Denmark and the Black Atlantic* (2006)<sup>112</sup>, *The Nordic Colonial Mind* (2006)<sup>113</sup> and *Rethinking Nordic Colonialism* (2006)<sup>114</sup> have proven very productive.

<sup>108</sup> Iceland was granted home rule in 1904 and gained full independence from Denmark 1944.

<sup>109</sup> Simma 1999, Katarina Pirak Sikku's artistic installation 2006 featured as part of the art project Rethinking Nordic Colonialism (Nifca 2005) [www.rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org](http://www.rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org)

<sup>110</sup> Broberg and Bryld's 2005 film featured as part of the art project Rethinking Nordic Colonialism (Nifca 2005) [www.rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org](http://www.rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org)

<sup>111</sup> For more on these projects, see [rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org](http://www.rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org). (Accessed 1. Nov. 2008)

<sup>112</sup> <http://blackatlantic.engerom.ku.dk/>. (Accessed 1. Nov. 2008)

<sup>113</sup> [http://www.nai.uu.se/research/areas/cultural\\_images\\_in\\_and\\_of/colonial\\_mind/](http://www.nai.uu.se/research/areas/cultural_images_in_and_of/colonial_mind/).

<sup>114</sup> [Rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org](http://www.rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org). See notes 109-111



*Rethinking Nordic Colonialism* brought together photography, film, installation- and performance-artists and academics from all over the world in ‘a first attempt at shedding light over this forgotten past [of Nordic colonialism] and writing a comprehensive history of Nordic colonialism’.<sup>115</sup> The project aimed at finding a relation between the common Nordic past and the current xenophobia sweeping the Scandinavian countries. Through art exhibitions, film screenings, public talks and discussions, and essays and papers the project sought to challenge the cultural non-memory of the colonial past. Crucial in the structure of the project was also that the events and exhibitions took place in the former Nordic colonies of Greenland, Iceland and the Faeroe Islands and in the territories of indigenous peoples in northern Finland, Norway and Sweden. The periphery became the centre – though mobility in the ‘globalised’ world proved intricate, when directing the attention of the media to far-away places such as Nuuk, Greenland, Rovaniemi, Sapmi, and Reykjavik, Iceland challenged the curators of the project.

While leading academics and curators presenting an alternative picture of Scandinavian cultural history and identity are struggling for academic, public and media attention, the representation of ‘white’ Scandinavia in the non-Scandinavian media is forcefully implementing a stereotypical social imaginary of Scandinavian ‘whiteness’. *Rethinking Nordic Colonialism* confronted the Scandinavian ‘white’ identity sustained through cultural memories, as I discussed in connection with the Caribbean former Danish colonies in the preceding case study. Moreover, the Scandinavian ‘white’ and homogeneous identity is supported by the social *genetic* imaginary (Franklin 2000). Genetics are being used as a new way of seeing life, identity and social practices spurred on by new bio-technologies. This remakes nature as a technique in parallel to earlier times’ remake of nature into historical determinism and identity. In this case study I focus on genetic aspects of the social imaginary which in chapter 2 and 3 I defined as made up and sustained through journalistic cultural memories. The social genetic imaginary is widely communicated through journalistic practices. In this case study I discuss in which way this social genetic imaginary is sustained and sustains the notion of the ‘white’, homogeneous and masculine identity of the Nordic countries. Following that I will discuss the notion

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<sup>115</sup> <http://rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org/files/index.htm>



engaging with feminist, postcolonial and ‘race’ theories in order to suggest another positioning of journalistic subjectivity in relation to Nordic, ‘white’ hegemony and social imaginary.

With the developments in the field of biotechnological research and its results, a strand of genetically-based narratives or cultural memories about origin has gained ground. It is the representation of IVF and sperm banking which readily lends itself to a biological rendition of a particular historical, territorial and cultural heritage. It is closer to cultural determinism than to biological determinism (Goldberg 2006) though the two are often hard to separate. Women’s place in this mediated narrative of origins is a presence defined by omission and circumscription. In this case study I argue that Christian origin is connected to the Son and the Father; the Viking origin is connected to masculine warriors and predominantly male gods; and the reproduction of man through the world’s largest sperm bank, *Cryos International*, is likewise set in the masculine. However paradoxically, following the construction of the nation as culturally defined, but in an almost ‘natural’ way, the representations of women as the bearers of national identity (Griffin and Braidotti 2002), as bodily degenerates (Gilman 1985, Schiebinger 2004), and as symbols of the nation-state (McClintock 1995) are readily attached. The question of reproduction and of controlling reproduction – and thereby the question of female representation and the control of female bodies – is always already interlinked with narratives of origin. Cultural and reproductive control additionally raises questions concerning heteronormativity and deals with issues of the nation-state, racial categorisations, and exclusions and inclusions of ethnic diversities, able bodies, religious communities and sexual minorities etc. In a historical perspective it, moreover, raises the issue of the split between the categories of ‘the human’ and ‘the animal’.

## 2.1 ANALYTICAL APPROACH

I will not attempt to address all the debates implicated in raising the issue of IVF and DNA research in the Nordic region. While realising that the issue of origin latches indeterminately and continuously on to other issues – of which some came up in the previous case study and some will return in the following case studies. In this case study I nonetheless restrict myself to following one strand of two intersecting



discourses. They are the strands of biotechnological reproduction and its entanglements with the myth of (the somewhat civilised) Viking origin. Taking as a starting point and as an example an article from *The New York Times* (2004), which reports on the world's largest sperm bank, I apply a genealogical approach to the article and the derivative journalistic and public narratives of origin and reproduction. This approach additionally draws into question the journalistic cultural memories and narratives of these appropriations in present Danish social imaginary as I outlined the concept in chapter 2. I will, thus, analyse the article according to its object of reporting: the sperm bank, *Cryos International*, and in terms of the iconic symbolism that the article draws on in order to outline the journalistic cultural memories on which the idea of Scandinavian Viking identity is based. I will expand on these issues using in-depth analysis of *Cryos International*'s American website and a BBC television documentary production, *The Blood of the Vikings*, to elaborate further on the myth of origin following the narratives about these Nordic pirates. This approach is situated in a discursive tradition which is structured around power and power relations making up public and private discourses. Though my focus is on journalistic practices, in this case study I am using the term 'mediated' production in the sense which resembles what Chouliaraki (2006) lays out and in which 'mediation' calls on an ethical response by deferral. '[M]ediation is about the (re)production of the social relationships of viewing and so it begs for an analysis of power that focuses specifically on the articulation of the medium with its visual and linguistic texts' (Chouliaraki 2006:60). However, I do not follow Chouliaraki's structured outline of language and image modalities, time-space continuum and agency. Rather I present a number of debates that challenge the claimed universality and objectivity of 'white' 'western' culture and politics as well as to relate these debates to the societal and productive context of contemporary European and 'western' globalised and mediated culture and politics. As defined in chapters 1 and 2 in these case studies I work with a re-definition of journalism as theory and practice of production of cultural memory and social imaginaries of gendered, ethnic, religious, national and racial differences. The case studies portray certain aspects of this journalistically mediated self-other relation and through them I argue for a creatively productive turn in journalism based in new journalistic subjectivities.



### 2.1.1 Structure of analysis

In the first part of the analysis I am mainly drawing on discourse analysis and genealogical analysis linking the expression of the newspaper article and *Cryos International*'s website to politico-historical events and the social imaginary of Denmark. The second part of the analysis deals with visibility and phenomenological perceptions (in both meanings of the word) and I therefore additionally draw on semiotic analysis of iconographic usage of the Viking. This is, then, a reading of a contemporary journalistic production and practices on the issue of sperm banking and genetic relations with which I want to suggest that the myth of origin of man and the ideas of eugenics and controlled (racialised) reproduction is not merely a historical (arte)fact, but is implicitly represented today in our ways of construing and constructing ourselves in a common social imaginary. This construction is affected and emphasised by journalistic cultural memories as I outlined the concept in chapter 2. *The New York Times*, the BBC documentary and the website of *Cryos International* are to be taken as examples of general impressions about the Danish social imaginary concerning origin. I attempt to shed light on this issue, so that we may change the myth of the homogeneous North and thus create space for diversity.

I do not intend to argue that genetic research and scientifically-assisted reproduction is always already racist or implicated in a wish to reproduce the same. I do want to argue that awareness of an implicit but often-ignored genealogy of 'whiteness' is a necessary step towards breaking down the myth of homogeneity in the Nordic social imaginaries. I will therefore draw the readers' attention to the 'whiteness' of the Nordic norm and to level a critique of unquestioned assumptions, which circulate in more or less explicit degrees in the Nordic and wider western societies. Nordic journalism is a major exponent of this myth. In order to enable a journalism of relation – along the lines I sketched in the previous chapters – a new focus needs to be directed at ethical accountability. First and foremost, for journalists situated at the centre of European culture, such as Danish journalists, a critique of a number of culturally embedded assumptions needs to be developed. These are assumptions, for instance, about what counts as a subject of knowledge within journalistic practice, that are usually left implicit. Applying the insights of gender, 'race' and postcolonial studies I recommend that whiteness, implied Christian values, objectivity and



universality are especially targeted for awareness and criticism. Through this method the practice of Nordic journalism could evolve away from its colonial implicitness and assumptions into a renewed cosmopolitan approach. My guiding question in the following genealogical analysis is, then, in which ways do local and European historical narratives, representations of genetic research, and visual representations of Vikings in journalistic and other mediated productions help (re)produce a 'white' and homogeneous social imaginary in Denmark? I will argue that *The New York Times* article, the *Cryos International* website and the documentary, *The Blood of the Vikings*, analysed here provide a way to understand where this question may lead.

Moreover the case study allows me to situate the iconographic and journalistic production in a 'global' space of interaction and affectivity. The analyses call attention to a long and morally repulsive history of colonial and intra-European usages of scientific methods and categories that worked in favour of classifying people racially and controlling reproduction of undesirable others through eugenics, forced sterilisations and medical and scientific manipulations of human beings. The intersections of the genetic discourse and the discourse of origin are not merely a picture in a passport. They are concretely embedded social practices with profound implications for human interaction. It is also strikingly represented and conflated within a culturally based 'western' social imaginary, which are analysed in this and in the following two case studies using journalistic and other mediated productions.

## 2.2 THE CONSTRUCTION OF GENETIC HOMOGENEITY

*The New York Times* (reprinted in the Dutch newspaper *de Volkskrant* on 9 October 2004) published an article on the Danish sperm bank *Cryos International*, the world's largest sperm bank, telling the story of 10,000 pregnancies worldwide fathered by Danish college boys under the heading, 'Spreading Viking Genes, Without Boats' (Alvarez 2004). Before I embark on a textual discursive analysis of this newspaper article I analyse the object of the piece. The Scandinavian sperm-bank *Cryos International* has two websites through which it presents a discourse on genetic heritage and origin, which the newspaper article taps into. It is a discourse shared with other genetic projects such as that conducted by the medical genetic research



company deCODE<sup>116</sup> Genetics, which bases its pharmaceutical and medical genetic research on the ‘population approach’. The ‘population approach’ has made deCODE and the company’s research on the Icelandic population famous worldwide because of the unique project of mapping the Icelandic DNA for research purposes. Approximately half the Icelandic population participates in the project. It is based on three sets of data collected from volunteers in the projects; the genetic, medical, and the genealogical sets of data. These data are accessible because of Iceland’s short but very well recorded history. The isolation in which Iceland and its inhabitants have supposedly been kept (as an island in a very northerly location and difficult of access) is seen as the reason for the genetic homogeneity which in turn is connected to the island’s Viking sagas, containing genealogical knowledge of the forefathers on the island. Homogeneity seems to be a fact of Icelandic discourse. Similarly, on its website, *Cryos International* argues for a stable homogenous gene pool connected with and representing the cultural memory of Viking warriors, to which I will turn next.

### 2.2.1 *The sperm bank of Cryos International*

*Cryos International* has two websites with information for its clients: One for the Danish market and one for the non-Danish, primarily American, market. According to the company this is due to the difference in policies concerning sperm banking in the US and in Denmark. Traditionally in Denmark hospital officials administer medically-assisted reproduction<sup>117</sup>, whereas in the US the clients are couples or individuals who desire a child. This is changing and the Danish clients are increasingly choosing their own donor sperm. Consequently the Danish and the American-focused websites are approaching each other in visual image and message. The following presentation however is based on the old version of the American website which was available at the time when *The New York Times* article was featured. In this version of the

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<sup>116</sup> <http://www.decode.com/>.

<sup>117</sup> In 2007 lesbian couples and single women won the right to fertility treatment and the Nordic sperm banks decided to run their businesses in Denmark as they had done for quite a while abroad. The sperm banks made information available about the sperm donors such as occupation, physique, likes and dislikes as well as baby pictures and voice recordings. This new approach was debated because the regulations which the doctors (who used to select the donor semen in connection to fertility treatment) used to abide by restricted them to consider skin, hair- and eye colour, weight and height of the donors only. The debates never questioned if in fact intelligence, musical talents or a particular liking of liquorice is hereditary (Mols 2007).



American website of *Cryos International*<sup>118</sup> the viewer could scroll down the site to a link called ‘Vikings’. This part of the website provided a window into Danish heritage – into the heritage of the potential baby. Under the heading, ‘Congratulations! It’s a Viking’, it said:

You were expecting a giant guy with horns?

That is so 10th century. Today’s Vikings are an eclectic lot, like their parents. We’ve dealt with plenty of moms- and dads-to-be, from German-Sudanese couples to Malay-Australian and infinite combinations in between. Parents tell us that their new-wave Vikings still set out on voyages of discovery, often landing at local kindergartens. At Scandinavian Cryobank, we’re proud to have had more than a little to do with such developments.

Do Vikings need sturdier cribs?

It’s a good question. After all, our ancestors did have a certain reputation for robust health and brute strength. They loved the outdoors so much they took over England, Greenland, Iceland and most of northern Europe. These days, Scandinavians are known for calmer pursuits. Why, we even sponsor something called the Nobel Peace Prize. But be warned, today’s Vikings possess an uncanny ability to wrap parents around their little fingers.<sup>119</sup>

A picture of a dark-skinned baby with big curly black hair supports the text. Despite the common references<sup>120</sup> to the ‘blond hair and blue eyed’ Viking babies, it seems that *Cryos International* is trying to separate the signifier and the signified of this symbol of ‘whiteness’, the Vikings. However, the myth of the Vikings, their raids and sturdy physique is still being invoked in the campaign.

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<sup>118</sup> <http://www.scandinaviancryobank.com/> accessed November 2005. The website has since been changed and the ‘Congratulations! It’s a Viking!’ page is no longer accessible. The outline of the donors’ height, weight, skin, hair and eye colour has likewise been closed to public display though the sperm bank employees’ impressions of the donors are still available: <http://ny.cryosinternational.com/our-donors/impressions.aspx>.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> These references will be analysed in depth shortly.



The website's textual message falls in two categories; tracing back ancestry and bringing the genes into the future. Both categories draw on the conflation of genetic design and genealogy. The genes in the DNA testing and the sperm donations are linked to 'historical' ancestors, sagas and myths of a certain region's peoples. It is only parts of the myths and sagas – cultural memories – which are being told, though. Glossing over the violence and the half-truths, the receiver of the message – the potential client for instance – is left with a heroic male adventurer. The company emphasises the multi-ethnicity of the procreative outcome, while playing on the easily recognisable Viking imaginary. The ironic tone in which the Viking raids and killings are presented downplays the violence, while keeping the heroic charm of the imaginary. The mental picture invoked is of a 'sensitive Viking' (Kroløkke and Foss 2006). And of course the reference to the Nobel Peace Prize, which is sponsored by Denmark, but is in fact of Swedish origins, thus making the Danish sperm bank into a Scandinavian joint venture, like that of the Vikings.

Despite the brown skinned 'Viking' baby depicted in the website, the overwhelming majority of the donors are 'white' Caucasian. The reasons for using this particular Nordic sperm bank are often explained to clients in terms of a visual marker. They may have Scandinavian ancestry and want their baby to share this heritage. The Viking iconography is an imaginary of purity, not only in the genes and the heritage, but also of phenotypes, to which I will return in the next section. The whiteness, the purity and the authenticity are sought after in the discourse of DNA research. The Scandinavian discourse on genetic Viking heritage provides a slippage between the categories of genetic information, genealogies and physical appearances, which allow the Viking to stand out as an ultimate Scandinavian representation. It is, however, a representation which is reachable in 'real life' through the reconstruction of lost genealogy or through sperm bank donations from a Danish college student, as I discuss in detail below.

### 2.3 AN ARTICLE ABOUT A SCANDINAVIAN SPERM BANK

Despite the modest size of the article 'Spreading Viking Genes, Without Boats' (Alvarez 2004), it calls attention to several interwoven factors related to the myth of origin of ('white') man, which I presented above and which I will discuss in detail



below. Narrating the story of how *Cryos International* came to be the largest sperm bank in the world, journalist Alvarez draws on a linguistically and visually expressed imaginary of brutal Vikings as well as the idea of intelligence and other mental capacities being genetically hereditary. Thus, she begins her story by imagining

If, suddenly, children in some corners of the world look blonder and taller, if they feel oddly at ease on a bicycle or juggling three languages, there may be an explanation: Arhus (*sic*) and its university men. (Alvarez 2004)

Three aspects are immediately fore-grounded in this opening paragraph; firstly, the idea of a centre versus a periphery or ‘corners of the world’<sup>121</sup>, secondly, the idea of biology determining talents and mental qualities such as language skills and interests in cycling and connecting them to the notion of ‘university men’, thus, a conflation of hereditary markers and learnt behaviour, and thirdly, the linking of a certain ‘blonder and taller’ physicality and appearance to the Nordic region of Europe and more specifically to the Danish town Aarhus. On the following pages I analyse these three strands of geo-political, bio-technological and iconographic themes, marked in the analysis in italics, as they intermingle with each other throughout the entire article.

### *2.3.1 Centre-periphery*

The first strand, *centre-periphery*, is sustained by a number of hints towards the sperm bank company and college boys spreading genes worldwide, as well as through the emphasis on the international ‘demand’ of Nordic descendants for ‘pure Scandinavian spare parts’ and the ‘aggressive’ marketing and ‘industry’ involved. The tacitly imagined centre from where the genes flow, are marketed or demanded is marked by a well-known dichotomy. Forty countries are the receivers of the 10,000 pregnancies and among them are Middle Eastern countries where sperm donations, we are told, are considered ‘taboo’. This taboo is placed in stark contrast to the way Danish culture is represented. It is, namely, portrayed as ‘famously secular and sexually liberal’.

The article, thus, linguistically and through its narrative line underlines that the centre from where the strong genes spring is *purely* Scandinavian, whereas both the

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<sup>121</sup> In the following paragraph I quote and refer to the article using single quotation marks.



geographically, politically, religiously and culturally *distant* Middle East, as well as other less blond countries, belong to the periphery. This narrative of *purity* and geographical, political, religious and cultural *distance* has a long imperial history represented as the ‘white’ man’s burden of educating the world in the ‘white’ man’s image, that is, the racialised burden of helping the colonised world *catch up* with the ‘western’ Christianised level of civilisation.<sup>122</sup> This tale mirrors colonial expansion and the Christian crusades and missionaries that followed. In Alvarez’s words, the ‘explanation’ for the displaced whiteness to non-white<sup>123</sup> ‘corners of the world’ lies not in colonial expansion or Christian missions, but in the genes – or more specifically, in the masculine genetic compound. This, I would argue, renders the connections between genetic research and colonial expansion invisible. The connection is multiple and entails a number of ambiguities. However, in the following I argue that these ambiguities can be seen to stem from the difficulties of categorising ‘the human’.

### 2.3.2 *Modern science*

Theorists of ‘race’ and the history of eugenics and colonial expansion have argued for connections between the colonial era and raciology, which followed and sustained the European colonies. Much of the driving force behind European colonisation in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries runs parallel to the theories of eugenics and racial hygiene (Goldberg 2002, 2002a), which supported slavery in the colonies as well as in the Americas. The racist idea behind the quest to prove the ‘white’ man’s superiority with all means necessary is part of this constellation. Gilroy (2004a) has argued that the African and Caribbean colonies functioned as training camps for what later developed into population control, eugenics, and eventually genocide, and thus sees a direct (though complicated) line running from the colonial expansionary policies to the fascist movements of the twentieth century. The idea of racial differences and the ‘white’ man’s superiority was born of the Enlightenment and is structured in the model of the Family of Man or ‘the chain of being’, placing the ‘white’ man as the

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<sup>122</sup> The idea of teleological relations in which ‘the other’ is placed historically and culturally *behind* the Western culture is connected to a notion of modernity and progress.

<sup>123</sup> My use of the terms ‘white’ and ‘non-white’ is problematic in many ways. It posits differences in a dichotomous relationship and leaves the category of ‘white’ privileged and singular and the category of ‘non-white’ lacks internal differentiation. However, for lack of a better terminology I am using this vocabulary whilst keeping in mind the discrepancies.



head of the family of (a common) humanity (McClintock 1995). This connection is explained and elaborated on in chapter 1.

The argued rationality of this family structure sustained an idea of progress from ‘savagery’ (as experienced by the Europeans travelling to the colonies and to the New World) to ‘civilisation’ (that is, as people behaved in Europe), Anderson (2007) asserts. In other words, all humans can become civilised. However, it would seem that despite the notion of a common humanity defined through Christianity showing only superficial and physical diversity and with common opportunity to ‘progress’, nevertheless it is based on a hierarchical and Eurocentric idea of difference. The process of civilisation is racialised. A tension lies at the root of colonial racial thinking, which is preoccupied with the question of what counts as ‘human’ in contrast to ‘animal’. Particularly indigenous populations were often experienced as balancing on the edge of that distinction (Anderson 2007).

In chapter 1 I outlined the basis on which difference is implemented. The ‘human’-‘animal’ contrast results in a threefold differentiation; sexualisation, racialisation and finally naturalisation mark the hierarchical categories following the category of ‘white’ man in descending order in the structure of the Family of Man. Because these categories were figments of the ‘white’ men’s imagination an ambiguity is embedded in the narrative about genetic homogeneity and *purity*, which posits femaleness in the in-between of humanity and animality, civilisation and savagery. It is this imperial history and dichotomy of genetics which is silently evoked when *The New York Times* article speaks of ‘famously secular’ Scandinavia as opposed to the ‘corners of the world’ demanding pure Scandinavian spare parts, as reported by Alvarez (2004). It is a story of ‘the other’ being placed in the periphery not only of the western worldview but also in the periphery of modernity and genetic development.

### *2.3.3 Men breeding men*

Political and social debates and events, cultural and religious classifications and medical research and the mapping of the genome have today diversified and complexified the racial and racist discourse even further (Burdet 2007). The cultural



or social turn in race theories following the atrocities of the Second World War, when eugenics and racial thinking was pushed to its limit, has had an impact on the way scientists think of racial categories today. Notably, eugenics is not the same as the contemporary genetic discourse. Nevertheless, the idea of genetic *hereditary qualities* (the second strand) is clearly expressed in the answer to *The New York Times* by the managing director of *Cryos International*, Ole Schou: 'It's not that people want superchildren... It's that they want someone like them, someone they can relate to' (Alvarez 2004). The article thus allows for the concept of *relation* to be equalled to sameness or common ancestry, which is thought to give a common frame of reference outside time and space.

The denial of the desire of at least some future parents' for a 'superchild' is strongly negated in the donors' many academic and physical talents listed in the article and on the website which also state the donors' height, weight, eye colour and ethnic origin. Though it would be a mistake to assume that all prospective parents browsing *Cryos International's* website wish to reproduce a certain genetic compound, it is likewise difficult to believe that none entertain the thought. The message on the website is certainly one of the option of choosing the gene pool. What is at stake here is the social genetic imaginary (Franklin 2000), or in Anthias and Yuval-Davis' terms, a social 'ontology of collectivity or belongingness... postulated through common origin or destiny' (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1996: 2). Issues of relations, relatedness, in terms of reproduced sameness are socially imagined as part of a genetic connectedness, which determines qualities of personality, frame of mind and so on. It also determines a familiarity among people who are perceived to share genetic features and cultural heritage.

In the light of this emphasised – though not absolute – cultural importance of origin, some theorists focus on a perceived stability of the genome and genetic heritage. Additionally, these theorists warn of the risk that the ability to choose a future child's ancestry and the idea of a perfect life embedded in the genes will have social consequences and lead to discrimination 'against difference at the point of origin of life' (Le Breton 2004: 8). The argument states that due to the social, historical and political structures of most western societies today, 'white' children may be seen as



having a better opportunity at a more perfect life than non-white children. This was the reason behind the decision by an Italian woman of African descent to give birth to a 'white' child by artificial insemination. '[S]he believed that a white child had a better future than one of mixed race'<sup>124</sup> (William and Hawkes in *The Times of London* 1993, quoted in Berkowitz and Snyder 1998). Reiterating this event, Berkowitz and Snyder are *not* saying that the world would be 'white' if we could all choose to have 'white' babies – ambiguity is still highly present on these issues. However, with colonial categorisation fresh in mind, it is not an unfamiliar thought in the history of sperm banks and other controlled reproduction to have perceived 'social reasons' for choosing artificial insemination and population control. Minority groups have been forcefully sterilised for what was seen as the common good of the nation in Scandinavia for centuries (Sweden being the last country to abandon the practice in the 1970s) and Roma women are sterilised in Slovakia today (Burdet 2007).

Consider also the American millionaire Robert Graham, who created a sperm bank for intelligent people in the early 1980s, urging Nobel Prize winners to make deposits (Plotz 2005). Graham's idea was that the 'white' American race was intellectually deteriorating and needed a boost of 'intelligent genes'. Furthermore, the philosophy was to provide the users with a choice of a better life for their child. With Graham's 'Repository of Germinal Choice' it was no longer merely a question of bringing a child into the world, but an issue of bringing a *healthy, intelligent, 'white', heterosexual and able-bodied* child into the world. The sperm bank created over 200 lives before Graham's death and the closure of the bank in 1999. The idea of the sperm bank as we know it today, in which a choice of visible, physical and disease-free qualities are given, was born with Graham and, though it has undoubtedly developed since and though there are other ways of accomplishing genetically-assisted pregnancies, its origin is thus not entirely innocent but rather connected to the eugenics of the colonial era, the Nordic eugenics and the Nazi's positive<sup>125</sup> 'Lebensborn' project (Plotz 2005).

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<sup>124</sup> Her partner was 'white' and a child produced by the two of them would have been of 'mixed race' (William and Hawkes in *The Times of London* 1993, quoted in Berkowitz and Snyder 1998).

<sup>125</sup> The meaning of positive and negative eugenics is not about the value of the science: positive eugenics urges people with desired qualities to procreate, whereas negative eugenics denies procreation to those with undesirable qualities.



Through the social genetic imaginary of the Viking portrayed on the *Cryos International* website and in Alvarez' article, the common past of the Nordic people is constructed as a *pure* and *desirable* identity worth reproducing. It is ur-Scandinavian, and it is masculine. Again, the perception put forth seems to circumscribe female participation in the tracing of ancestry as well as prescribing a heterosexual norm. Women's bodies are either not part of the equation or they are mere wombs or containers that help the uncontaminated, male reproduction. Alvarez' article is about college boys, sperm and Vikings. Because of the strong connotations between the Viking imaginary and masculinity, the narrative slips into a tale of the male birth ritual (McClintock 1995) in which the female body is absent or by-passed. The fascination is with cloning of the same, Le Breton (2004) asserts. These journalistic representations latch onto the social genetic imaginary, which in turn calls upon reflections of early genetic research such as eugenics and racial, mental and able-bodied population control. It is a naturalisation of genetic destiny.

#### *2.3.4 Polluted lineages and vampires*

However, looking at the issue of genetically-assisted reproduction through Haraway's figuration of the *vampire* (1995), the picture is enabled to change dramatically. In the following I will discuss the 'naturalisation' of the social genetic imaginary with Haraway's 'unnaturalising' discourse.

Haraway (1995) argues that the idea of relatedness and genetic destiny is a way of denying the vampiristic unnaturalness of IVF and a potential of circumscribing the Family of Man – the ideal structure of the same. Haraway's figure of the *vampire* 'pollutes lineages', disrupts categories, and is 'undead, unnatural, and perversely incorruptible' (Haraway 1995: 322). The *vampire* belongs to the realm of technoscience and the undead that monstrously imitates the Family of Man. In the case of the sperm bank and its products, the figure of the *vampire* points toward the artificial construction of the lineage. The children that are supposed to be products of common ancestry are detached from time and space as a genealogical factor and are thus dependent on the perceived and corruptible DNA alone. 'Reproduction is afoot here, with all its power to reconfigure kinship. In the proliferating zones of the undead, the kin categories of species are undone and redone, all too often by force.' (Haraway 1995: 359). Haraway here argues for a possibility of undoing and redoing



the idea of origin and kinship rather than reinforcing it by regulating access to racial categories of sperm. Haraway's argument finds support, for instance, in the work of Evelyn Fox Keller (2000), who in addition critiques the view of the gene as a fixed entity determining everything from IQ to shoe size and cultural preferences and which can be transferred unaltered through generations.

Keller draws attention to the dynamic structure of the genome. Rather than a fixed identity the gene is ever evolving with the 'evolution of evolvability' (Keller 2000) as a driving force. Multiplicity is the structure. However, dominant ideas die hard, and the idea that you can design a baby in your own ('white' and blue-eyed?) image dies even harder. In other words, it is not the *knowledge* of the jumping genetic functions, which guide the media discourse on ancestry and genetic relation; rather, it is the 'cult of the gene' (Le Breton 2004) and genetics as 'the modern and secularized form of fate: a totalizing explanation of all the ills in the world' (Le Breton 2004: 4). The cult of the gene also provides an unwanted space for a colour-blind – or rather colour-ignorant<sup>126</sup> – reproduction of sameness. The genetic discourse is thus (re)enforcing an idea of a common predestined evolution.

Haraway's call for a changed perception of kinship may prove an uphill struggle in the face of mediated social genetic imaginaries. Defining Scandinavians as Vikings and Vikings as a certain breed of babies with certain positive genetic qualities, as is the case on the *Cryos International* website, eugenics seems to have gone mainstream. Haraway (1995) attempts to put a deconstructing bio-technological spin on the discussion about the concepts of the categories 'human' and 'non-human', which somehow still haunts the discussion, by opting for another way of thinking of 'family'. Read with poststructuralist feminists such as Haraway (1995) and with biogenetic thinkers such as Keller (2000), what is at stake in the new genetic discourse is a reconfiguration of the Family of Man and the reproduction of the same. Haraway and Keller's new genetic discourses provide an opportunity to 'theorize an "unfamiliar" unconscious, a different primal scene, where everything does not stem from the dramas of identity and reproduction' (Haraway 1995: 366).

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<sup>126</sup> By using the term *ignorant* rather than *blindness* I want to stress both meanings of the root of the word, *ignorare*: 'not to know' and 'rejecting to know', that is, to wilfully ignore.



Other theorists, by contrast, remain within a more dystopic paradigm and argue that the notion of choosing a baby's colouring, qualities and genealogy at the sperm bank connects the perceived 'good life' or even 'higher valued life' to a biologically predestined make-up, which is readily at hand to everybody and which has roots and routes leading to the colonial and Nazi eugenics. I suggest that Haraway (among others) aims at disrupting the hierarchy of 'the human' and 'the animal', whereas Le Breton (among others) keeps the categories present though necessarily still undefined. Whatever one's conviction, the advertisements and the websites for sperm banks call upon a need for awareness of the potential for another story of genealogical traces.

### 2.3.5 *Visibly Viking*

It is, however, not only a matter of inner qualities, such as personality and genetic traces of potential future diseases. The mainstream social genetic imaginary is further connected to an outer and visible representation, to which I will turn next. As is the case with most mainstream culture, the social genetic imaginary is both followed by and productive of very convincing 'visual effects'. Gilroy notes that imperial production of races and raciology required 'a synthesis of logos with icon' (Gilroy 2004a: 35) and that is what *The New York Times* article and the website introduce with the figure of the Vikings. *The New York Times* article couples the genetic discourse with a portrait of the Viking-donors and future babies using imagery and visual imaginary reminiscent of past racial and human classifications. In the following I will explore this iconographic imagery and visual imaginary further and trace its genealogy to fascist imagery.

In *The New York Times* article this third strand, of *the physicality and aesthetic* of the blond and tall offspring of Danish college boys, is obvious in the Viking metonymy hinted at in the headline as well as in the metaphor used throughout the piece. Additionally, the accounts of the sperm donors in the sperm bank catalogue describes the college boys as physically active in four kinds of sports and measuring 1.90 centimetres. On top of which the success of the sperm bank is said to be partly due to 'a high success rate in producing offspring' (Alvarez 2004). Thus, according to the



picture sketched in the article, the virile<sup>127</sup> Danish college boys of the twenty-first century, physically active and attractive, are populating the world just like during the Viking Age, only less violently, and as the heading reads, without boats.

The Viking imaginary is furthered on the website for *Cryos International* and by documentaries examining Viking lives and raids such as the BBC television production, *The Blood of the Vikings* (2001). I want to elaborate on the Viking iconography using this documentary, because it makes explicit what the article only alludes to in terms of virility, masculinity and wildness of the Cryos Viking baby and the historical Viking. The imagery used in *The Blood of the Vikings* introduces the Viking as a man with long blond hair and a fierce look. As the Online Etymological Dictionary states, a Viking is a 'Scandinavian pirate'<sup>128</sup>, a war-loving wildman out to spread his seed. Nevertheless, in the documentary he is an admired wildman, admired for his longships, craftsmanship and technical knowledge, as well as for his fierce fighting instinct. In *The Blood of the Vikings*, the Vikings are only portrayed in war battles, and the narrator Julian Richards meticulously describes their fatal wounds, deaths and killings. There is a kind of fascination with the violence the Vikings produced and the vision they had of their own worth in combination with their talent for the technical side of war. Though the Vikings are portrayed as plunderers and killers, rape is awkwardly absent from the narrative of the documentary and these acts remain uncondemned. A fascination remains, which can be paralleled with what Susan Sontag (1980) identifies as the love for and the aesthetics of the Noble Savage in fascist imaginary. She writes:

Fascist aesthetics include but go far beyond the rather special celebration of the primitive... [T]hey flow from (and justify) a preoccupation with situations of control, submissive behaviour, extravagant effort, and the endurance of pain; they endorse two

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<sup>127</sup> Again the ambiguity of this topic presents itself in that the Danish male population is in fact among the least fertile in the world. Several studies and conferences have discussed why 40–50% of Danish men's sperm count is below 40 million per millilitre. This is below 'normal' adequacy for pregnancy to occur and much lower than other nations' with male populations very much like the Danish, Finnish men, for instance. The problem has been discussed at several conferences and in the news as well. See, for instance, <http://www.dagensmedicin.dk/nyheder/2006/02/09/darlig-sad-er-et-samfundspr/>. (accessed 1. Nov. 2008)

<sup>128</sup> <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=Viking&searchmode=none>. (Accessed 1. Nov. 2008)



seemingly opposite states, egomania and servitude. (Sontag 1980: 91).

The parallel (and it is only a parallel) lies in the celebration of ‘the primitive’ through a ‘preoccupation’ with masculine physical violence and political power paired with the civilised and practical talents for developing war technology. Sontag’s Noble Savage is submissive and servile by virtue of being ‘untouched’ by civilisation: a traditional imperial notion of anachronistic representation of the ‘uncivilised other’. This is contrary to the case of the Vikings, in which the displacement in time is factual and so they can be seen as naturally submissive to civilisation while still admirable for their ‘uncivilised’ ways. The Vikings are, so to speak, excused for their violence.

Sontag goes on to argue for the fascist constraint of female importance: ‘a society in which women are merely breeders and helpers, excluded from all ceremonial functions and represent a threat to the integrity and strength of men’ (Sontag 1980: 90). This circumscription has already been discussed above, but it re-enters the stage in *The Blood of the Vikings*, though to a lesser degree, when the narrator Richards takes the task upon himself – with the help of scientists – to track Viking DNA in contemporary male Britons’ veins. The scientific experiment once again ties together genetics and masculine identity. Neither *The Blood of the Vikings* nor personal interests in Viking history or family genealogy dating back to the Viking Age are connoted as fascist. Rather the denotations of physical masculinity and fascination with violence and the connotations of this particular picture of muscular, ‘white’ men draw a parallel to the denotations and connotations of the fascist iconography of the perfectly shaped and healthy male body and its capacity for violence as well as honour.

An additional parallel in representational imagery and visual imaginary connected to *the Vikings* can be traced from the fascist ideals to the colonial categorisations of the Family of Man. Besides the lurid ‘science’ of racial hygiene, the colonial and the fascist ideas of race and raciology have visual representations in common. The commercialisation of whiteness to sell purity through soap commercials and other imperial products during the height of colonial regimes (McClintock 1995, Gilroy 2004a) is comparable to the fascist admiration of ‘white’ skin, strong health and



(male) bodies (selling political ideology). Richard Dyer (1997) elaborates on this complex visual and filmic history of the 'white', male body in the book *White*. In this visual iconography and narrative, as in the colonial eugenic discourse and the case of the Vikings, whiteness is equated with masculinity, which in turn finds its favourite position between deity and humanity. This is evident in Riefenstahl's documentary *Triumph of the Will* (1935) in which Hitler is seen as a deity descending from heaven, sustained both by filmic aesthetics (lighting, camera angles and the opening sequence following Hitler's plane's way through the clouds) and the Nuremberg rally content (the cheering crowds, adoring faces) carrying sexual undertones (Sontag 1980: 102).

In Hollywood productions, the super-human, 'white' man is personified in characters such as Tarzan, the Terminator and Rambo: all portrayed by athletes and bodybuilders. Dyer draws further attention to the 'peplum' movies of Italy produced between 1957 and 1965, which depict heroes of classical antiquity in mythical and Biblical stories. The genre displays the 'built body and the white values it carries' (Dyer 1997: 167). The relationship to fascism is highly complex and cannot be simplified (Dyer 1997). As I have argued above, Dyer explains that the complexities lay in the connotative suggestions in the iconography of strong, 'white', male bodies, which are part of the audience as well as larger than life. This iconography is a *continuance* of the fascist imaginary featuring Mussolini in the place of the athletes and muscular men. It is a continuance and not a repetition or a glorification of the fascist imaginary. It is moreover recognisable in the Nazi representations of the 'Aryan' soldiers and Hitler. All this to say that fascism is the 'explicit *politics* of whiteness' (Dyer 1997: 165, my emphasis). As journalist and documentary theorist Brian Winston puts it, fascist aesthetics are the dark side of European tradition – we [in the Western European countries] want to treat it as a virus, but it is a part of us.<sup>129</sup> This discussion opens up for an analysis of the documentary *The Blood of the Vikings* to which I will turn below.

It is crucial to account for the genealogical parallels of uses and abuses of the imagery and imaginary of 'white', male Viking bodies selling hopes of future Viking babies who perhaps need 'sturdier cribs' and show particular 'exploratory' tendencies – as

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<sup>129</sup> Brian Winston, interview in *The Late Show Special: Leni Riefenstahl* (BBC Production 1992) television documentary.



the *Cryos International* website suggests. By drawing parallels between the iconography used to evoke the Viking imaginary, the fascist imaginary of ‘white’ supremacy, and the colonial raciology, I have emphasised the connection of connotations in order to create an awareness of that particular part of the European tradition in the hope that awareness may help produce new reflections and rethinking of our sense of belonging and self.

## 2.4 THE BLOOD OF THE VIKINGS<sup>130</sup>

In the following I want to use a semiotic approach to analyse the documentary, *The Blood of the Vikings*, produced by the BBC in 2001 and followed up on the BBC History website.<sup>131</sup> I will investigate the relations between meanings, myth and signs (icons, indices, and symbols) of *Viking*. This connects to the concept of branding, with which parts of my analysis of the documentary will be operating. Branding might be called the latest bud on the stem of semiotics, though it implies economic and political structures as well, and in this chapter I will confine the use of the concept to that of genealogical travelling. By this I mean the way in which ‘walking in the footsteps’ (Plate 2006) of ancestors or forefathers and -mothers helps to construct signification and/or myth in ways of production of cultural memories. Finally, *The Blood of the Vikings* combines two forms of knowledge production; journalism and archaeology. Additional knowledge is being extracted from the field of genetics but in a way which simulates the knowledge production of archaeology. The protagonist of the documentary, Julian Richards, is digging in the British gene pool for DNA artefacts, so to speak, in order to find further evidence of the Vikings’ lives and conquests. DNA becomes yet another sign of *Viking*. The archaeological approach informs the journalistic narrative in a way which brings the past into the present in contradiction to the scientifically advanced methods of enquiry and creates what could be called an *anachronistic space* (McClintock 1995). I will return to this, but first I will sketch out the content of the documentary *The Blood of the Vikings*.

### 2.4.1 Presenting the documentary

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<sup>130</sup> Richards, Julian (narrator) (2001): *The Blood of the Vikings* (BBC Production 2001).

<sup>131</sup> This website is no longer active, however, the BBC has replaced it with another more general website on Vikings: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/vikings/index.shtml>.



*The Blood of the Vikings* was produced by BBC Television in 2001 and presented by Julian Richards. The documentary contains six episodes each of thirty minutes' duration. The six episodes are called; 'First Blood', 'Invasion', 'The Sea Road', 'Rulers', 'Empire' and 'The Last of the Vikings', and combined they follow a classic cinematographic narrative of beginning, presentation of conflict, elaborating and increasing the conflict into a climax, and an ending, which restores 'normalcy' and/or peace. The progression of the six episodes' titles furthermore connotes expansion and power; from the first appearance, through penetration, expansion, and finally rulers of an empire. In content the episodes tell a story, which covers a time period of 250 years of on-and-off Viking conquests, wars and settlements in the present day UK and Ireland, seen from a British perspective. The proclaimed thesis of the documentary is to discover *the truth* about the Vikings in the UK and to find evidence to support this truth in contemporary written sources, archaeology and DNA research. These fields of research inform the journalistic agenda and create a convergence of journalism and primarily archaeology as I noted above. All three fields, though, provide the documentary with an archaeological terminology, which is also the field on which the documentary focuses. I will show that the documentary is telling a double story throughout the six episodes, there is a binary function of the introduced concepts in the documentary. Thus, *blood* means both death and life, *trails* of the Viking conquests are both explored on an inside and an outside level, and *history* is both past and present.

Finally, I will argue that Vikings in the documentary are both historical and symbolic – but more on this later. I will likewise structure my analysis according to this double narrative, taking as my starting point and my constant point of reference the title, *The Blood of the Vikings*. I will more concretely be looking at the denotative and connotative meanings of *blood* and of *Vikings*, and argue their position in the Barthesian concept of myth. I am focusing on Barthes' notion of *myth* in order to avoid a limiting linguistically textual reading (Barthes 2000). My use of the term *iconography* is based on Peirce's definitions of *icon*, *index*, and *symbol*.

#### 2.4.2 Vikings

I am using these concepts to think of the specific function of *Viking* in the documentary and in myth. There are two reasons why I am only allowing the concept



of journalistic cultural memories to function as background in this case study; firstly, the strong connection between myth and Nordic mythology in the stories of the Vikings makes the method of semiotics appropriate. Secondly, there is a methodological connection between Barthes' concept of myth and the semiotic method of analysis which I am using. However, the parallels between my concept of journalistic cultural memories and Barthes' myth (Barthes 2000) are continuously kept in mind throughout this case study.

The iconic representation, according to Peirce, is a representation which shares something with that which it represents. Hence, a religious icon is a depiction of a saint often carrying or holding something, which symbolises the particular attributes of the saint. Like the iconic saint, *Viking* is an arbitrary sign connected to a referent, but is it an icon in the strictest sense of the word? Do the wild, blond men with long hair and helmets bear resemblance to the Scandinavian people, who lived between the seventh and the thirteenth centuries? And recalling Barthes' notion of myth: do they indeed need to bear any resemblance? As in the case of language, '[i]t is we who fix the meanings so firmly that, after a while, it comes to seem natural and inevitable' (Hall 1997: 21). Due to the scarce information about the historical Vikings and their looks, the iconic symbols, such as, for instance, the helmets, do not resemble the actual people or their material possessions, but rather the narratives – the fixed meanings, the myth – of that people. The same may be true about the religious saint, and so I would use the term *Viking* (in italics) to mean not the actual people, but their iconic representations.<sup>132</sup> However, the helmets and the long hair, not to mention the killings, the slender war ships, and all the other signifiers connected to the Vikings, may be seen as Peircean indices as well. So, the characteristic helmet with the nose protector (of which only one has been found in archaeological excavations anywhere) points to the sign of *Viking*, which points to the referent of the historical and naturalised myth. As I will argue here, *Viking* as represented in the documentary, moreover, symbolises a certain myth. In the Peircean sense of *symbol* there is here an implicit arbitrary relation, though. Yet again I want to invoke Barthes on this issue, and argue that intertextuality in the Kristevaen sense of the word and Barthesian mythology make such a complete arbitrariness impossible. The symbol of *Viking* is

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<sup>132</sup> I am making a distinction between the historical Vikings, and the iconic *Vikings* (written in italics) and I will be using the term 'Vikings' to describe the denotative level of the documentary.



unavoidably connected to a naturalised historical narrative of a 'western' worldview, which I will set out to prove in the following analysis. Rather than being arbitrary, I will argue that the relation is constantly constructed and sustained through repetitions and power relations (Foucault 1991). As such, myth is specific to its history and society and can never be finally fixed (Hall 1997). The semiotic approach is taken in order to engage the concepts of iconic and symbolic representation, which respectively work on a visible and an invisible level of whiteness.

#### 2.4.3 *Blood-lines*

*Blood* is, as just mentioned, both life and death, and it is pervasively masculine in its representation in this production. Not only present in the title and the sub-title of the first episode, on the graphic level, as well, blood is symbolised by the colour red. Each episode begins with a presentation of the previous findings in the quest to discover the truth about the Vikings, and this summary is accompanied by grandiose gothic choir music, which brings to mind a nineteenth-century interpretation of medieval monks chanting. A reconstruction of Vikings sailing, fighting, killing and coming ashore is covered in a tint of red, which makes the sea look like a gigantic pool of blood on which the Vikings are sailing. The Vikings themselves are heavily armed, wearing helmets and their hair is long and flowing. The reconstruction appears to have been created using a hand-held camera underlining a confusing *in media res* atmosphere of arms and legs, dying people yelling and screaming. The title of the documentary is first shown as a shadow gliding over rocks, and again later in illuminated letters. In a bombastic finale to the opening credits, the title fills out the red screen, the screen turns hereafter bluish, the music fades down and the title of the particular episode is presented.

This introduction carries a connotation of blood-as-death, war and mutilation, which is elaborated throughout the documentary. Though on the denotative level, using historical reconstructions and language, the documentary is finding out the truth about whether the Vikings stayed and settled in the UK and Ireland, on the connotative level it is rather a symbolic blood trail which is being shown figuratively and as narrative. A map elaborates this narrative using red arrows and red dye, which slowly seeps over the map's Nordic European region as the Vikings' conquests and raids spread and evolve into a massive empire reaching from the northern Americas in the West to



present-day Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia in the East. Thus, blood is on one hand the colour red, death and destruction, but on the other hand blood is life in the narrative of *The Blood of the Vikings*. Blood-as-life is constructed through a rhetorical interchangeability of blood and DNA. One of the topics in *The Blood of the Vikings* is the use of blood samples with human DNA to find out whether the Vikings stayed in the UK and Ireland and settled, procreated and thus left another kind of blood trail – or rather DNA trail – in the contemporary inhabitants. This conflation and investigation revives the old eugenics theory of ‘the one-drop of blood’ race theory, arguing that genes/blood connect to a hereditary familiarity with a certain historical people. Furthermore, it makes the narrative of life into a masculine narrative using the y-chromosome to trace the genetic lineage of contemporary British and Irish people.

An almost complete lack of female Vikings or other women moreover sustains this masculine narrative, helped along by the recurrence of close-up pictures of (phallic) test tubes illustrating this male birth ritual. I want to add a few explanatory notes to the lack of female representation in the documentary. It is an archaeological narrative but made journalistic through choices of subject matter and editing, which means that the journalistic choices create the ‘reality’ we are shown – not the archaeological evidence alone. *The Blood of the Vikings* shows us that along with male skeletons female skeletons are found in graves of the Viking period on several occasions. The graves often contain ornaments and domestic appliances, relics and figurines representing the Vikings themselves. In *The Blood of the Vikings* female skeletons are mentioned just a handful of times: in the beginning of episode 1, when the grave of a Viking queen is referred to; later in the same episode, evidence of Viking violence is confirmed by the finding of a grave containing two men, two children and a woman; in episode 3, an elderly woman is referred to as having been buried with a 30 year-old man and a child. She too had valuable possessions with her in death. In episode 5, two women are mentioned; one woman was a human sacrifice in an ancient ritual, the other woman is said to have been Celt, but married to a Scandinavian Viking, probably in an arranged marriage in order for him to gain land, we are told. This lack of women on the denotative level creates connotations. Though at least four out of five women are mentioned as individuals and with a connecting history, their role in the Viking society is never explained or commented on. Though the documentary professes to explore if and how the Vikings settled in the UK, the only mentioning of



females in these settlements seems to be that of a Celt woman – and she is merely a way of gaining property, and so she functions as the narrative of woman-as-land expressed for ages through map-drawings, tales of conquest of virgin land, and Freud’s idea of Woman as the dark continent etc. As I have already mentioned, the reproductive discourse, which by definition is at least 50 per cent female, is displaced into the realm of scientific DNA narrative, where only the y-chromosome is used to trace the genetic similarities between Scandinavian and British and Irish men. The reason why the y-chromosome is chosen is represented in the documentary with an abrupt visual shift to presenter Richards’ personal leisure time, driving small motor vehicles around a muddy and bumpy terrain with his son, while in a voice-over he explains that the y-chromosome is responsible for *maleness*. Moreover, he shows us pictures of his grandfather, his father and he and his son, proclaiming that as long as there are male Richards the y-chromosome will survive practically unaltered, which is why ‘only this chromosome contains the genetic information’, which is needed, and makes it such ‘a powerful tool’ when researching DNA traces and connections. Despite this forceful interpretation of the male chromosome and its importance, in episode 5 it is made clear that using the y-chromosome is only one way of tracing DNA signatures, and that looking at a specific female chromosome would render an equally reliable result. This is, for instance, the case in Iceland where both the male and the female genetic code have been mapped out using new DNA signature techniques. The spreading of the y-chromosome in the case of the BBC Vikings is also taken as evidence for Viking settlements – if in fact the Vikings settled – and of how many they were.

Though Richards seeks the truth about what *really* happened, he nevertheless suggests that what really happened has been known all along, namely, that the Vikings were a war-loving people, who killed and slaughtered thousands of British and Irish people through 250 years. This is proven through repeated emphasis on the battles between the peoples, and especially through the detailed accounts of how mutilations took place – that is, the blood-as-death narrative. The new aspect, which the documentary adds to the knowledge of the historical Vikings, is that the Vikings somehow managed to replicate themselves – that is, the blood-as-life narrative. The latter narrative which is used to represent the lives and settlements of the Vikings is likewise masculine. It is gendered male through DNA terminology and by reducing



the female to land and conquest. The Vikings who went on raids to the British Isles were 80 per cent men, the documentary states. However, that leaves 20 per cent women, and when the Vikings settled, which seems to be the main line of argumentation in the documentary, one must assume that females were present in the settlements. On the other hand, it is rather naïve to think that just because DNA has survived it follows that Vikings must have settled down in the area, whereas the question of war rape does not come up even once, though plenty of slavery and the 60 per cent Celtic origin of the female Icelanders are mentioned.<sup>133</sup> The lack of representation of reproductive sexuality cannot be excused with reference to the potential audience as including young people, when at the same time the graphic explorations of slaughters, slavery and pagan sacrificial rituals are frequently repeated. I see this orgy of male blood – be it blood-as-death or blood-as-life – and the deliberate exclusion of female lives as a cementing of *Viking* as masculine. But more than that, it is a self-replicating maleness, a ‘male, *reproductive* order of patriarchal monogamy’ (McClintock 1995: 4).

This reading of the double blood theme in *The Blood of the Vikings* shows moreover other double meanings. Thus, the trail of the Viking conquest is both an exterior geographical trail shown on the map, and an interior map of genetic conquest represented both with blood and/or the colour red. Similarly, the story told is both about the past travels and wars of the Vikings, and the lives and research of present day people. I will come back to these doublets shortly.

Not only male but also ‘white’, the blood of the Vikings is seen to appear unchanged in the veins of present-day Britons. Implicit in the Viking narrative is the taken-for-granted whiteness of Viking skin. It is made clear in the reconstructions as well as the descriptions of blond hair etc. But more so it is an invisible ‘white’ norm (Dyer 1997) which is followed up through the militaristic and reproductive discourse of blood. The DNA research in the documentary suggests a purity of blood and genetic lineage leading directly to the British people of today, who are able to call themselves at least partly Viking. The understanding of genetic lineage as something which survives unaltered in the veins of a people is connected to a historical and cultural period in

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<sup>133</sup><http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/281235/Iceland#tab=active~checked%2Citems~checked&title=Iceland%20--%20Britannica%20Online%20Encyclopedia>.



time and underlines an ethnic familiarity – a ‘white’ familiarity.<sup>134</sup> The entire argument of the documentary is built up around finding and following the trace of Viking blood in the veins of Britons in particular, thus the familiarity and the ‘white’ Viking-ness must be seen as pivotal to the documentary’s storyline as it is in *The New York Times* article. The familiarity moreover links the culture of the Vikings – or rather the journalistic cultural memory – to the meaning of the bloodline. Thus Vikings emerge as icons of ‘whiteness’ through the blood as well as through culture. In the following I will argue that the cultural memory of ‘whiteness’ – as well as the genetic whiteness – is a structural myth building on an invisible norm of traditional European identity placing crucial importance both on Christianity and – and somewhat paradoxically – on the Enlightenment.<sup>135</sup>

#### 2.4.4 *Viking spirituality*

Turning now to the representation of *Vikings* in the title, it is by now clear that the Vikings themselves are portrayed as male. Not only in the ever-recurring introductory reconstruction of the Vikings’ ships approaching the English shore riding their bloody wave, or the astounding lack of female contemporaries, but also in the general story told about them in *The Blood of the Vikings*. The objects and the human qualities in the journalistic representation accentuate the masculine values of progress, ambition, expansion, and war. The iconic uses of the excavated items from the Viking Age all point to *war* supporting the narrative of blood-as-death. Swords, helmets and ways of dying and mutilations are meticulously described, and jewellery and brooches are seen as trade goods rather than beautifying objects. Thus, the Vikings are almost more *Men* than the British: they are shown as being unsophisticated brutes, who do not write, heathens who mutilate and enslave. This may seem strange in connection to the common binary systems of black/white, passive/active attached to female/male attributes seemingly leaving the British and the Irish (who are the producers, the protagonists and the intended viewers of the documentary) as the feminine. I want to suggest that it is a question of another binary; the enlightened/the primitive. This is supported by the religious/heathen dichotomy, which changes – or rather merges – as the narrative moves along, and necessarily so, since at the end the viewer of the

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<sup>134</sup> Though Julian Richards in a later publication in the series, ‘A Very Short Introduction’ [to the Vikings] emphasises that ‘it is important not to confuse race and identity’ (Richards 2005: 132).

<sup>135</sup> This European cultural whiteness will be theorised and discussed in case study 3



documentary – the British and Irish men – need to identify with the Vikings, because they are genetically part of them.

By way of elaborating, I mentioned in passing the female skeleton presented in episode 5, which was thought to have been a female human sacrifice in a pagan ritual. This ritual has been described in annals, it is proclaimed, and the grave furthermore suggests that this kind of ritual took place. Despite much talk about this particular grave, the ritual is mentioned as perhaps not being the norm of Viking practices at all. It is, however, one of the very few times Viking belief systems are mentioned in *The Blood of the Vikings*. Another time is in the conclusion to the programme, when Richards mentions the roots of the word *Thursday* to be of Viking origin, and carrying the meaning of *the day of Thor* (one of the main gods in the Nordic mythology) – but by this time the narrative has already shifted. Most of the documentary, however, portrays the Vikings as ‘pagans’ as opposed to the Christian inhabitants of the British Isles. This dichotomy implies a lack of spirituality on the part of the Vikings, whereas monks represent the English most of the time. The Vikings thus are all body and no spirit. Moreover, in episode 2, Richards says that when the Viking army attacked Britain in the year 865 it marked the beginning of over 100 years of Viking-British fighting ‘not just for the land, but for the very souls of its people’. This rhetoric seems to suggest a moral or religious battle strategy between the meek Christians and the all-too embodied barbarians. However, no evidence is presented to support this argument. The Vikings attacked the monasteries, but their reasons for this are unclear. The Christian monasteries were wealthy and badly protected, which would make them preferred and easy targets, but the documentary chooses to go with the dichotomous thinking, and presents arguments which lean towards an explanation that sharpens the contrast between Christianity and paganism even further. This is the mythical structure, which is made apparent. Episode 2 also presents the theory that the reason for the Viking raids was the Christian power coming from the south bordering on present-day Denmark, which pressured the Vikings. Hence, they believed that they should either surrender to Christianity or fight back – and they chose the latter. However, the hatred for Christianity, which would possibly have laid the foundation of this decision, is being countered by other findings suggesting a co-existence between Viking settlers and native Britons or settled Anglo-Saxons. The documentary makes no attempt to understand the religious background of the Vikings or what



implications a merger between ‘natives’ and Vikings would have produced. Monks authored the written evidence of the Viking raids in the UK and Ireland, linking Christianity to literacy. Though the late Vikings made attempts at writing, carving their memoranda into stone in the form of *runes*, their traditions were predominately oral.<sup>136</sup> *The Blood of the Vikings* presents some of the runes found in the UK and in Denmark. However, they are dismissed as ‘the sort you’d expect from Vikings: boasting of treasure and women’. The angle of the documentary on the representation seems in this way to be assumed Christian, extending no attempt to explain the pagans’ beliefs or positions. The Vikings are thus illiterate heathens only capable of brutish graffiti. This narrative changes, however, when the Vikings turn Christian in the tenth century and take over the English throne. Then the piety and the spirituality of King Canute (died 1035) are made explicit. Christianity is introduced as being the birth certificate of the modern Danish state. Christianity was not just a religion, but also a legion of loyalty, literacy, money and power – and ironically continental Christian institutions thus sponsored a major raid on the UK in the early eleventh century, and helped instate the Danish Viking King Canute on the throne. King Canute is represented as a wise man, a pious man, and his self-image is elaborated on and explained. Furthermore, Richards visits his grave at Westminster Abbey with a gesture of respect for the king which is lacking from other grave visits in the documentary. The binaries of enlightened/brute, Christian/heathen, and literate/graffiti are slowly blurred. Richards begins expressing his admiration for the Vikings’ combat training camps in present-day Denmark, their extraordinary talents for building war ships in episode 4, and their trading skills with faraway places like Basra, present-day Iraq, in episode 5. The silver trade was extensive as well as the trade in enslaved humans and bearskins. Trading posts excavated in Dublin and Gotland in Sweden testify to this, as well as exotic coins and looking glasses.

As the Vikings become part of the Christian and Continental narrative and become an economic power, they also become more admirable and worth aspiring to without losing their war-loving appeal. In the words of McClintock, this might be called a myth of ‘the global, *political* order of empire’ as well as the ‘white *economic* order of [...] capital’ (1995: 4). McClintock, in *Imperial Leather*, introduces her field of

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<sup>136</sup> This oral tradition was highly elaborate and was collected and written down in the thirteenth century – by Christian monks – and is known as the Icelandic Sagas



investigation with an analysis of Haggard's novel *King Solomon's Mines*, which describes a map of where to find the treasure of Solomon. The map spells out the submission of feminine sexuality, as well as the masculine political and economical power as underlying myths of European imperial narrative. The same goes for the narrative of the Vikings in this documentary, where DNA underlines the European identity of cultural whiteness by tracing genetic whiteness as well. In addition, the deliberate denial of not only women, but of femininity and values traditionally seen as feminine such as wearing jewellery etc., expresses an absence, which in itself tells a tale. The documentary makes it perfectly clear through graphics, rhetoric, and the fields of archaeology and science, that women are lacking in the myth of *Vikings*. The absence has been naturalised and myth is restored.

Thus, parallel to the story of the Vikings runs a story of symbolic *Vikings*. The *Vikings* are militant in the extreme, but with sophisticated engineering skills. They are certainly male to the extent that they reproduce themselves by means of male birthing rituals involving scientific narratives, and they are 'white' in the European sense (see chapter 1) connecting whiteness to the collective of Enlightenment, Christianity, and capitalism. The whiteness is furthermore emphasised in the DNA approach as well as being invisible and taken-for-granted. The *Vikings* are myth, which links the text of the documentary to the experience of its message, and the message feeds into the 'white' patriarchal economic, political and reproductive order.

#### 2.4.5 Traces of Viking

Returning now to the double meaning of *trails* and *travels* in the documentary, the external travels emphasised by maps and red dye and arrows comes back into the picture. It is a question of expansion and claiming of the empire. However, Richards makes a point of visiting old excavation sites, and travels to Denmark, Norway and Sweden *to see* and *experience* the places from where these fighting forefathers came. The graphical map used in the documentary is in this way also showing the travels of Richards as well as of the Vikings. According to Plate (2006), the notion of heritage in popular culture as well as significance of historical traditions and places are becoming increasingly important in social history. Memory has moved from being a national concern to being a personal enterprise mediated through media and tourism. Quoting Nora (1989), Plate writes: 'Modern memory is, above all, archival. It relies



entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image' (Plate 2006: 105). Plate also argues, that 'memory has turned into a matter of "storing" and "story-ing"' (Plate 2006: 105) gaining meaning only through narrative. The relations between time, memory, and space can be said to depart from a modern spatialisation of the self, which creates a sense of ourselves and binds the self into the world (Crang and Thrift 2000). This concept of memory is a bodily rendition of what I developed in chapter 2 as 'journalistic cultural memory'. Whereas I configured cultural constructions of storing memory through journalistic practices, Plate conceptualises this phenomenon in the world of tourism and commodification outside the mediated constructions. In the next case study I will elaborate on the usages of cultural memories in terms of archival storage and in terms of narrative constructions of history.

*The Blood of the Vikings* shows how Richards walks in the footsteps of the Vikings, how he re-traces and re-members the steps of the forefathers while binding himself and by extension the viewers to history and narrative. Whilst the spatialisation of historical re-membering evokes a sense of belonging and a materiality of memory and history, it also brings the past into the present; or rather it conflates time and space. This conflation of time/space makes the movement through geographical space analogue to a narrated linear movement of progress through time, which by means of a male re-birthing culminates in present-day British and Irish men. This is a space/time movement not unlike the movement McClintock (1995) sees in the colonial literary discourse as mentioned above. Plate is analysing the uses of the literary output of Virginia Woolf in the cultural production of a mythical but at the same time real London in books and as tourist attraction. What Plate (2006) recognises in tourists' guide books on 'Woolf's London' is the cultural commodification of the urban walk through the city, which brands London as a literary space combining the past and the present in space and time. Similarly, I want to argue for a link between the Viking iconography and symbolic uses and the branding of the Danes, and indeed Scandinavians, in cultural, political and economic terms. The Vikings can be used to sell Scandinavian sperm precisely because *Viking* means something to the international customer. As Celia Lury (2000) argues, when discussing how the clothing company Benetton in its advertisements uses the colours of human beings and of clothes to market its fashion lines, Benetton is not seeing



colour as 'race' but as a 'style' (Lury 2000: 148). Race and differences among people's skin colours is a matter of style rather than a matter of power-relational and historical reality. It is a pick-and-choose culture. Similarly, the historical Vikings can be left behind or re-appropriated to fit the market, so that it is not the historical Vikings and their raiding and raping that are globally mediated and commodified, but the *Vikings* exploratory tendencies and heroic fighter instincts. As Benetton's colourful outfits construct a cosmopolitan worldview disregarding power relations and oppressions, the *Viking* symbolic can be 'worn' – be taken over as a identity – signifying merely a heroic, masculine forefather, leaving the actual historical power relations of the Viking Age behind.

## 2.5 THE LAST WORDS OF THE VIKINGS

The picture of a brown baby with black curly hair accompanying the text 'Congratulations! It's a Viking' on the *Cryos International* sperm bank's website not only designed to play into the American multicultural society (Kroløkke and Foss 2006) for which it is intended. It, moreover, globalises the *Viking*. Going beyond the iconography of the 'white', male fighter portrayed in *The Blood of the Vikings*, the website uses the symbolic Viking – the surplus meanings of the brand – to sell its products. Postulating that it is the inherent qualities of the Viking which are global and for sale, the sperm bank sustains a message of global community through commodities and capitalism. The message of the global community is reproduced in the TV documentary, *The Blood of the Vikings*, although it may be more difficult to obtain the Viking-ness or style as it is portrayed here. Still, it makes available the Viking style to anyone (with money to buy) circumventing the racial markers of the *Viking*. Through commodification, then, a deconstruction of 'race' seems to take place, though this does not mean that racisms are done away with (Gilroy 2004a). Similarly, Gilroy (2004a) argues that African-American culture – such as represented in different forms of music – is commodified to a degree where the itinerary of the culture and cultural history become inconsequential in corporate multiculturalism. Like Gilroy's black male bodies being used to sell sports equipment because of their perceived inherent qualities (Gilroy 2004a: 246-65) the Viking's exploratory genetics is selling 'whiteness', strength, masculinity and power in the form of semen. However, the Viking is 'white' and, as I have argued here, connected to a power position unlike that of the African-American man. The Viking may be savage and



barbarian, but he is also 'white'. As such he takes a privileged social, political and cultural position and is in this way linked to the European rational Self through the European imaginary. Maybe because of the Viking's 'white' representation, the 'circulation of such iconic commodities [...] within the spectral economy of global transmission supports the global market of Sameness' (Braidotti 2006: 58). The Viking thus becomes yet another branded commodity in a global economy praising the quantity of 'differences' as opposed to qualitative multiplicity (Braidotti 2006). In sum, I have supported the argument that the icon of the Viking and the symbolic meanings attached to it brands the Scandinavian heritage as possessing a certain set of qualities, while the distribution of the brand commodifies the representation as global Sameness.

I have moreover read the documentary *The Blood of the Vikings* semiotically using two keywords from the title to tease out connotations leading me to a structural *myth* of 'white', male, militant superiority. *Blood* is a symbol for both masculine destructive power and creative power, turning the *Vikings* into an iconography of male militant supremacy. Circumscribing female reproductive powers – handing them over to a male genealogy in the name of science – maleness is instated as the giver of life and death. This is not an altogether unknown discourse to the European and Anglo-Saxon self-identification. But in *The Blood of the Vikings* the connotation of whiteness is achieved through a connection between *Vikings* and Christianity, Enlightenment and capitalism. Furthermore, the genetic discourse of the documentary also carries with it a notion of purity and 'one-drop of blood' eugenic theories indicating a straight, and pure – unsoiled by women and others – genealogical line going from the medieval blond wildmen to the Enlightened British of today. Connecting the male self to a Viking iconography allows the British and Irish viewers of the documentary to identify with a civilised cultured 'whiteness' while still keeping in touch with animalistic cave-man maleness represented through the brutal Viking. In my analysis I also called attention to meaning of the *trail* and walking in the footsteps of ancestors. I connected it to popular memory emphasising the importance of remembering the past, thus bringing it into the present in a sort of anachronistic space. The double temporal pull, which McClintock (1995) identifies as the *anachronistic space* in the colonial discourse, has a counterpart in the *Viking* iconography: Temporal searching for a self through contemporary science and biology, DNA technology,



simultaneously praises the scientific progress and returns to an ancient (essential) identity. The *Vikings* are both ancient and very contemporary, because of the blood which ties men together, and because of the iconography of whiteness. Finally, I argued for a proliferation of commodified Sameness through the iconography and symbolic surplus meaning of the *Viking* branding the Scandinavian region and its inhabitants as particular and yet the Same.

My genealogical reading of *The New York Times* article and the discursive and semiotic lines of media and web-based derivations has shown the way in which local and European historical narratives, representations of genetic research, and visual representations of Vikings reproduced through journalistic and mediated products, inform our social (genetic) imaginary and thereby our notions of self and belonging. Alvarez' article draws on colonial *centre-periphery* discourse without accounting for the racial-genetic history that this discourse entails. Furthermore, she deals with *genetic* discourse as well as *visual iconographic* representations, which also carry with them genealogical traces and call upon historical and cultural narratives of origin. In the social genetic imaginary, origin is both racialised and gendered. Particularly important seems to be the notion of 'kinship' which invokes sexist as well as racist formations of exclusion and inclusion. Kinship figures in the heterosexual reproduction of the Family of Man, which uses the figure of the patriarchal structured family to guide understandings of reproduction and origin. Kinship likewise draws on racist discourse when informed by the argument for 'the good life' embedded in the DNA and supported by 'white' iconography of warrior Vikings. Generally, kinship is underscored by the recent genetic discourse of sperm banks and genetically-assisted reproduction. All of these discourses render the female line invisible if not irrelevant and leave Viking heritage to be a 'white' and masculine representation.

### *2.5.1 Journalistic awareness of the myth of homogeneity*

In the previous chapters and case study I suggested that a theoretical approach to journalistic practice attached to an embedded and embodied journalistic subjectivity potentially produces a creative and affirmative journalism of relation. In connection with the iconography and discourse surrounding the representation of the Vikings, journalist-subjects need to decentre themselves from the identity-based 'whiteness' and structure their production and practice on solidarity and affirmation. This



journalism of relation, I argued in chapter 3, is a *becoming-minoritarian* that functions as a political activism away from the hegemonic position of journalism or identification. *Becoming-minoritarian* works along the lines of a continuous deterritorialisation that breaks with geo-political schema of ‘western’ hegemony. The territorial point is important to the Viking myth of homogeneity because the myth, history and memory are connected physically as well as mentally to the region. Territory is engaged as a means to define citizenship and national, cultural and emotional forms of solidarity and cohesion (Gilroy 2004a). De-rooting – rhizomising – the territory may afford a method for multiplying of the memories connected to it.

In the introduction to this case study I presented the artistic, public and scholarly project, *Rethinking Nordic Colonialism* (2006), which can be seen as a way of confronting the Nordic myth of homogeneity from a deterritorialised position, or from a position in flux. As reiterated in the introduction, the project was made up of a variety of artistic representations, public events and discussions and academic interventions coming from many different geo-political spaces and situated in the (post)colonial ‘periphery’. Each contributor approached the project from a subject position. Some of the artists used their own bodies, ethnicised positions or political convictions to illuminate an aspect of Nordic colonial relations. The act and method of positioning themselves within the issue – finding out the personal, embodied approach – deepened the project’s questioning of the colonial non-memory of the Nordic peoples. Taking this project as a point of orientation, journalist-subjects may begin to question their own stake in the Nordic (post)colonial representation. As discussed in the previous case study, acknowledgement of embedded and embodied journalistic subjectivity is a process of knowledge production that enables an ethical response and returns accountability to the journalist-subject. It is not about placing blame for the atrocities of colonialism but about assuming accountability for how it is continuously re-membered through journalistic cultural memories and stored in the social imaginary. It is a project-oriented, community-based affirmative ethical practice.

In the third and last case study I go even closer to the foundations of journalistic practice and subjectivities in my analysis of the connections between freedom of expression and the European and broadly ‘western’ identification with the corollary



concepts of tolerance and equality. Re-invoking Deleuze and introducing Derrida into my theoretical and methodological readings, I seek to culturally deconstruct the arguments for the untouchable nature of liberal democratic values, such as freedom of expression, tolerance and equality, within the realm of journalistic practice.



### CASE STUDY 3:

#### 3.0 SITUATING THE CASE OF THE CARTOON CONTROVERSY

The final case study presented in this dissertation differs from the previous two case studies in that it is based on discursive themes and polemic social and political public debates emanating from a journalistically initiated controversy. Whereas the previous analyses were based on journalistic products, articles and TV documentaries, this case focuses on the journalistic foundations and the expressions they were given in the discussions that followed the publication of the twelve cartoons. Rather than analysing products and productions of journalist-subjects in this analysis of what came to be called ‘the cartoon controversy’, I focus on the analysis of the assumptions about identity, citizenship and Danish-ness which underscore the entire controversy. That is to say, the hardly noticeable ideas of secularity, ‘whiteness’ and tolerance which lay behind the mediated debates following the publication of the cartoons in a Danish daily in 2005 and how these concepts intermingle and sustain each other. This case study analysis also differs from the previous analyses in that it adds to the discourse liberal democratic arguments which, rather than basing the self-other relation in cultural and national memories, advance the assertion that universal values of liberal secularity and secularism are at stake. The previous case studies have invoked cultural memories conflating historical, national and territorial belonging and cultural and genetic genealogies. This case study is founded more broadly in the European common narrative. It could be advanced that the ‘clash of civilisations’ narrative which is current in the politics of the ‘western’ world supports this sort of larger-scale civilisation-oriented binary. It is a shift from smaller community-based antagonisms to boasting claims of belonging to an entire and well-specified civilisation. My analysis in this case study will show that both ‘racial’, cultural and secular-political arguments are enforced in the debates fostered by the cartoon controversy. The new civilisation-based sense of belonging does not exclude a culturally, ‘racially’ or religiously based foundation for a unified ‘us’, rather it is changed and reworked to encompass the broader scope when necessary. I argue that these different arguments and levels of belonging are interlinked and sustain each other to a large extent. This means that the cartoon controversy emerged within a dynamic relationship between culturally embedded identity-politics in the Nordic region and the European-based narratives of Enlightenment and rational progress.



The cartoon controversy is moreover the most recent of the three case studies in this dissertation and the one that generated the most publicity. The fact that the cartoons were pictures made them accessible to a ‘global’ audience rather than the limited population of Danish-speaking people.<sup>137</sup> The simplicity of a pictured statement opens the reception of the picture to a world of various responses and interpretations. The cartoons became a ‘global’ controversy because of their visual accessibility which moreover was amplified and multiplied through the internet. However, some of the cartoons also presented the viewer with particular Danish political issues, which were lost in translation. I will present this shortly.

The cartoon controversy as it is presented here is focused on certain aspects due to my particular aim of and argument in this dissertation, which I present below. Much more could be said, and no doubt will be said, in this case as it continues to develop, provoke and challenge.

### 3.1 FROM THE HORSE’S MOUTH

I am using published opinions from scholars and journalists put forward in books and articles to support the claim that, though the cartoon controversy made the Danish public more aware of the world outside Danish geo-political and intellectual borders, moreover and more importantly, it potentially made a self-reflexivity and self-critique available to the ‘western’ journalist-subject regarding his or her own practice. The cartoon controversy was initially about, initiated by, and discussed, in the journalistic realm of practice and theory, from the horse’s mouth, so to speak. By virtue of its journalistic roots, the cartoon controversy makes a particular critique and potential for change possible. I will return to this argument in more detail below after unfolding the general argument that cultural and Christian heritage emerges unacknowledged within the liberal defence of the cartoons (Peters 2005). Those unacknowledged roots of liberal secularity amount to what I call secular illiteracy. More on this shortly.

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<sup>137</sup> The issue of the Danish language in the cartoon controversy interestingly mirrors the issue at stake in the first case study, on Danish-USVI relations, in which the population of the USVI are hindered in accessing their own recorded historical past because it is written down and documented in Danish. Delving into this issue is tempting but unfortunately outside the scope of the dissertation at this moment. I propose to pursue this line of thought in future work.



According to the cultural editor of *Jyllands-Posten* at the time of the publication of the twelve cartoons, Flemming Rose, the cartoons were initially published with the aim of starting a debate about journalistic and artistic self-censorship in relation to the topic of Islam in Denmark (Jerichow and Rode 2006: 14-16).<sup>138</sup> As a former foreign correspondent in Russia, Rose saw parallels between the Russian journalistic practices of self-censorship in the face of the Russian government and Danish journalists' responses to issues of Moslems and Islam in Denmark. Later, for Rose, the controversy became an issue of freedom of expression on a global scale (Kastrup 2008). For theorists and intellectuals, as well as for Rose, the themes behind the controversy furthermore called on broader discussions of liberal values of tolerance and equality. The particular setting of the cartoon controversy in the realm of the press focuses these fundamental discussions of liberal democratic values, because the press, as a major exponent of freedom of expression, holds an exaggerated responsibility of response (Derrida 1992, Silverstone 2007). While freedom of expression ensures the press has the ability to speak for the public (importantly, this is always a journalistic interpretation of public opinion (Derrida 1992: 95) and hence it is inextricably linked to the concept of objectivity, as I argued in chapter 2 and to which I return in this case study), the editorial power of the press continuously reduces the diversity and at times the contradictory nature of 'public opinion' and its voices. The reduction is achieved through the editing function serving a certain journalistic format which sieves out expressions that do not fit. That is, the press limits equal access to express content – i.e., an opinion or an experience – to content which fits a certain form and by virtue of this fit expresses a particular sameness. In my view, however, it is not 'enough to give content to a form in order to advance the freedom of the press, that is, the freedom of a right that will never go without duty or without the recognition of a freedom "before the press"...' (Derrida 1992: 98). With the hegemonising power of the press follows a duty to listen to and represent minorities as well as dominant opinions. Vigilance is needed so as to avoid both censorship of diverse opinions but also 'new censorship', which rises out of a media monopoly (Derrida 1992: 99) and reduces equality before the press to sameness of format within the press. As I will argue, this double notion of censorship already disrupts Flemming Rose's initial claim that journalists are practising self-censorship in relation to writing on Islam. The 'new censorship'

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<sup>138</sup> A fuller summary of the events will follow shortly.



proposed by Derrida is interestingly informed by John Durham Peters' (2005) argument that the surplus value of disapproving of censorship is a positioning of the self as more knowledgeable and enlightened than the person who questions unlimited freedom of expression. By arguing against censorship, a hierarchy of enlightenment and rationality is enforced and in the cartoon controversy this position was claimed by many Danish and 'western' journalists as being the foundation of journalistic practice itself.

As I briefly mentioned above and which I have debated at length in chapter 2, freedom of expression is connected to the concept of objectivity. In a recent interview with a Danish newspaper, Flemming Rose expresses the wish that the cartoons will be reprinted in future educational school books in Denmark so that a possible 'neutral' position will arise from where the cartoons and freedom of expression can be discussed (Kastrup 2008). It is possibly this assumption of a neutral position which moreover makes Rose believe in a removal of all restrictions to freedom of expression (Krasnik 2008). This would imply a removal of laws prohibiting hate-speech, for instance. Rose's stand resembles the Habermasian argument that the 'public sphere' provides a space for open discussion which then inevitably will lead to a rational consensus. However, in this case study I am arguing that attempting to take an 'outside' position, ignorant of gendered and racial power relations, makes journalists and editors blind to the very embeddedness and embodiedness of their practice. The critique of freedom of the press and of democracy, which Derrida (1992) calls for as a 'democracy to come', becomes impossible if critique can only be levelled at the other and within the journalistic format of sameness. I name this lack of self-critique and self-reflexivity secular illiteracy and, discussing a postcolonial theoretical framework in this case study, I argue for an introduction to and a further development of what Edward Said (2000 (1983)) calls 'secular criticism' and an epistemological critique of the informational duty of journalism.

Secular illiteracy, or unawareness of the post-secular moment, express a lack of both consciousness and knowledge about the 'white' and Christian dominant position, which structures 'western' societies and glues them together in social imaginaries of 'our culture'. The structure is constantly reinstated and enforced through media narratives and by upholding boundaries towards ethnic or racially recognised others.



In this case study I argue that this imaginary, though not believed to be so, is in fact based on a Christian Protestant notion of individualism and universally claimed values. These values are furthermore expressed in a liberal secular language. Thus, the Enlightenment doctrine of freedom of expression overshadows the potential for diverse and indeed enlightening debates following the Danish publication of the cartoons in 2005. Debates about political spin and cultural public relations were few and far between in the political and public discussions in Denmark as well as abroad. Moreover, the cartoons' different agendas were overlooked, despite their potential to open up the debate. For instance, one cartoon portrayed not Mohammed but Bluitgen (the man who initially claimed to have problems finding an illustrator for his publication on the life of Mohammed, which led to the argument that journalists and artists practise self-censorship<sup>139</sup>) with a turban on his head and an orange in the turban graced with the title 'PR Stunt'. A couple of the other cartoons featured the leader of the rightist Danish People's Party, Pia Kjaersgaard, and one cartoon pictured the future of Danish Moslems as a schoolboy writing in Farsi on the blackboard that 'the editors of *Jyllands-Posten* are a bunch of reactionary provocateurs' (Jerichow and Rode 2006: 14). These other cartoons make very different political statements about the Danish discourse and policies than what was expressed during the controversy. Though an article in *Harper's Magazine* discussed the history of satirical cartoons<sup>140</sup>, this was still done in the framework of secular liberalism – that is, the format was the same – and the article stood almost alone in the massive production of articles and opinions following the controversy. This case study will argue that it is crucial to engage in radical epistemological understanding and analyses of identity formations such as feminist, postcolonial and 'race' theories in order to generate an ethical response and debate in relation to the construction of 'Europe' and its others.

In the concluding section of the case study I pick up the theme of tolerance and hospitality in order to develop the idea of a journalistically cosmopolitan ethics, which I introduced in chapter 3. I am returning to the Braidottian and Deleuzean aspects of subjectivities to advance an argument for cosmopolitan 'conviviality' (Gilroy 2004). The cartoon controversy was heavily dichotomised in journalistic, public, political

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<sup>139</sup> The outline of the events follow below.

<sup>140</sup> *Harper's Magazine*, July 2006, 43-52: <http://www.harpers.org/archive/2006/06/0081081> accessed 26 July 2008.



and academic debates and I will argue that it will stay that way unless we shift our perspectives and experiences of relations. My argument is that journalistic practice has both a heightened responsibility and a capability to open up a space of alternative subjectivities and to explore the many other or othered subject positions. These positions should be explored both in terms of content and in terms of format. The gendered perspective, the ultra-liberal account, and the politically critical approach all run against or transverse the common-sensical reading of the cartoons and the related controversy. They may be informed by embodied and embedded experiences and a journalistically practised cosmopolitan ethics as I have described it in chapter 3.

However, I will begin by summarising the (in)famous history of the cartoon controversy.

### *3.1.1 Summary of the cartoon controversy*

On 30 September 2005 the Danish national daily newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*, published twelve cartoons depicting the Moslem prophet Mohammed. Following an article in the daily newspaper, *Politiken*, about an author's troubles in finding an illustrator for a children's book about Mohammed's life, *Jyllands-Posten* wished to initiate a debate about journalistic and artistic self-censorship (Jerichow and Rode 2006: 14, Kastrup 2008, Krasnik 2008). Although they had been informed about the Moslem belief and law that the prophet Mohammed should not be represented by the human hand and hence it should not be attempted, in late summer 2005 the editors of *Jyllands-Posten* nonetheless encouraged about forty cartoonists to represent Mohammed 'as they saw him'. Twelve cartoonists answered the call and their work was published shortly afterwards. Offended by the publication (and in particular one cartoon, which depicted Mohammed with a bomb on his head), ambassadors from predominately Moslem countries contacted the Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, in the hope that he would discuss what they saw as rising xenophobia and lack of respect for religious minorities in Danish public and political debates. The Prime Minister, however, declined. Already less than a month after the publication in Denmark one of the cartoons was reprinted in an Egyptian newspaper – in order to illustrate the alleged Danish xenophobia – and also by October the Qatar-based TV station al-Jazeera mentioned the publication. In December a delegation of Danish imams went to a number of Middle Eastern countries promoting the view that



Denmark was Islamophobic and was mistreating its Moslem population (Kunelius et al. 2007). This tour of, among other places, Syria and Saudi Arabia, resulted in a boycott of Danish dairy products, and initiated demonstrations, flag burnings and attacks on Danish embassies. The Danish dairy company, Arla Foods, had to lay off one hundred and twenty people in Denmark due to a decline in exports. One hundred and thirty-six people were killed in Moslem countries and communities during demonstrations against Denmark and the publication of the cartoons. Simultaneously, the cartoons were reprinted in several European newspapers. Several people, Moslems, editors, and journalists, are currently on trial or imprisoned due to their actions relating to the controversy.

In February 2008, the Danish security and intelligence service (PET) arrested one Moroccan-Dane and two Tunisians on suspicion of planning an attack on the cartoonist, Kurt Westergaard, who is the artist of the widely discussed cartoon depicting Mohammed wearing a bomb with an Arabic inscription from the Qu'ran on his head. Under the new counter-terrorism regulations, the two Tunisians were to be extradited without a trial. They were still held in prison at the time of writing in July 2008, while the Moroccan-Dane had been released from custody. In response to the arrests and allegations of the planned attack, all the national Danish daily newspapers reprinted Westergaard's cartoon in support of the cartoonist and of freedom of expression as well as an illustration to the story. The reprinting of this cartoon yet again provoked demonstrations around the world. However, none reached the same level of anxiety, violence and frustration as the previous events.

### *3.1.2 Binary themes and the reasons why*

In the article accompanying the cartoons on 30 September 2005, the reason for the publication was given to be the fear felt by Danish 'artists, authors, cartoonists, translators and theatre people' and the self-censorship practised as a result. The cultural editor of *Jyllands-Posten*, Flemming Rose, explained further:

The modern, secular society is rejected by some Moslems. They demand special treatment when they insist that their religious feelings are considered. That is incompatible with western democracy and freedom



of expression in which one must be ready to accept insult, mockery and ridicule. (Jerichow and Rode 2006: 14-16, my translation).

Thus, from the very beginning the controversy was framed in a dichotomised discourse with its roots firmly placed in structures and ideas created by ‘western’ modernity. At times the following debate, which continued almost a year after the publication and was subsequently refuelled by the reprinting in 2008, was almost anachronistic in character because of the constant reification of Enlightenment credos such as ‘modernity’, ‘secularism’, ‘equality’, and ‘freedom of expression’. These credos were repeated with little room for evaluation or development. Danish politicians, particularly the more nationalist parties in parliament, greeted the UN Secretary-General at the time, Kofi Annan, with political protests and disbelief when he suggested in connection to the controversy that cultural integration is a two-way street (Jerichow and Rode (eds.) 2006). However, former Minister of Foreign Affairs in Denmark and former member of the EU parliament, Uffe Ellemann-Jensen (Liberal Party), succeeded in introducing some self-reflection when he stated, with some understatement: ‘If freedom of expression cannot entail questioning of the way in which freedom of expression is used, then it is not worth much’ (Jerichow and Rode (eds.) 2006: 218 my translation). In my view, this goes to the core of the cartoon controversy and the ever-continuing debates raising issues of tolerance, equality, secularity or secularism and of hospitality. It is the issue of the ability to critically assess and reflect on the foundations for democracy and the interpretations we conduct and induce through political discourses and certainly through journalistic production and practices. The category of gender, for instance, took part in the cartoon controversy in an implicit manner forging a hegemonic ‘us’. Danish politicians emphasised the Danish pledge to gender equality as part of their conception of ‘western secular democracy’. Sexual difference, which only thirty years ago was a site and a cause for great dispute and some would argue still suffers from problematic policies, was during the controversy naturalised and assimilated into the ‘western us’. A group of exiled authors – among them Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Salman Rushdie – wrote and signed a manifesto titled, *Manifesto: Together facing the new totalitarianism*, in which they insinuated an analogy between male dominance of



women and Islamic dominance of the rest of the world.<sup>141</sup> They strongly rejected such dominance and ‘plead[ed] for the universality of freedom of expression, so that a critical spirit may be exercised on all continents, against all abuses and all dogmas’. Thus, the manifesto invoked known Enlightenment ideas of universality and freedom alongside a contemporary idea of equality between men and women. Moreover, it argues for secularism rather than secularity – a distinction to which I will return.

Consequently, thematically, the controversy displayed a very uniform picture of ‘western’ secular democracy as being limitless in regard to freedom of expression and near-perfect in terms of equality. Critiques were urged but only if they were directed at Islam. It was portrayed as a question of legal discourse whether *Jyllands-Posten* was in the right or in the wrong when publishing the cartoons. However, as Ellemann-Jensen also noted in his commentary on the controversy, perhaps it was, after all, not a question of law but a question of morals or ethics. In this case study I discuss the possibility of an ethical response to the cartoon controversy. Because my starting point is that the case should be discussed in terms of social and journalistic experiences of relation, rather than in terms of legality and rights, I am confronting the secularist view of the *Jyllands-Posten* editor Flemming Rose and the direction the debates took following his initial article and publication. In the following, I discuss the epistemological shifts available in the cartoon controversy. I do this through postcolonial theories and theories of the (post)secular. However, I proceed to make a call for an ethical response through discussions of concepts of tolerance, equality and cosmopolitanism in which I draw on theories already introduced in chapter 3.

### 3.2 EPISTEMOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

The cartoon controversy sparked a number of discussions in several distinct fields of research and of public debate, which went on in the media as well as in scholarly locations. Before I move to a discussion about the particular role of the press and journalism in this case study, I want to situate the controversy politically and theoretically. Political science scholars debated the liberal politics of freedom and individual rights in edited volumes of papers (Modood, Hansen, Bleich, O’Leary and Carens 2006) or in eclectically collected opinion pieces and analyses (Dworkin,

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<sup>141</sup> See also chapter 2 for more on the manifesto, as well further discussion on the role of gender later on in this case study.



Tripathi, Jack, et al 2006). Philosophers debated the controversy's relation to the ideas of citizenship and of Europe (Henkel 2006) and writers and journalists debated these ideas in relation to their fields of expression and competence (Edgar 2006). The Union of Danish Journalists dedicated an issue of its monthly members' journal to the controversy. Also within media and journalism studies, the controversy enabled a debate about journalistic ethics and the functioning of a journalistic discursive and social 'field' (Eide 2006, Kunelius et al. 2007), ideology or culture.

In their introduction to a comparative project on international journalism, Risto Kunelius, Elisabeth Eide, Oliver Hahn and Roland Schröder (2007) draw up a helpful conceptual landscape to illustrate the recurring positions within the debate on freedom of speech prompted by the cartoon controversy. They identified four such positions: (i) Liberal fundamentalists, for whom freedom of speech is seen as the primary value to uphold and defend. For the liberal fundamentalist, 'there is nothing beyond tolerance, no need to learn from others except in the ultimate case of being converted into a new paradigm'; (ii) Liberal pragmatists, for whom, the 'universal tendencies [of the imperative of freedom of speech] have to be tempered with a sense of more practical and local considerations'; (iii) Thirdly, dialogical multiculturalists, for whom conversation and dialogue is prioritised over the 'absolutization' of freedom of speech; and (iv) Finally, the fourth group is the proponents of religious and ethnic fundamentalism, which 'aims at protecting its own stable world order by refusing to *argue* on its behalf.' (Kunelius et al. 2007, 17-18). Kunelius and co-authors see those participating in the cartoon controversy debate to be representing the three first groups most of the time. It is also the three first positions which are readily identifiable in the debate between five scholars of political theory in the special issue of *International Migration* (Modood, Hansen, Bleich, O'Leary and Carens 2006).<sup>142</sup> Whereas Modood, Bleich and Carens – their many differences notwithstanding – can be placed tentatively in groups (ii) liberal pragmatism and (iii) dialogical multiculturalism, Hansen and O'Leary belong more in groups (i) liberal fundamentalism and (ii) liberal pragmatism. I am placing the contributors to the email correspondence and later-published debate in overlapping groups of belonging to suggest that the groups, of

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<sup>142</sup> Though this publication is a collection of communications between the authors I will refer to each of the authors distinctly below. There are no editors listed and the collection of essays on the common topic was originally a correspondence between the authors. In the References this online collection is listed under the name of Modood et al.



course, are not water tight, but rather blend into each other. Carens (2006) succinctly notes:

It seems to me that one's views on the Danish cartoons case and on what policies and practices are appropriate in Western states are likely to depend, at least in part, on whether one thinks that Islamophobia is a serious problem in these states or not. (Carens 2006: 41).

In this case study I argue that not only did the cartoons express Islamophobia, but I think they were at times downright racist.<sup>143</sup> I argue that much of the cultural and political positioning for and against the publication of the cartoons went unnoticed by the contributors of the debate. That is, in this case study I look at the cultural-religious background for the political assertions during the cartoon controversy and linked them to the liberal democratic claim of universality.

In order to substantiate the claim made above I need to return to the theories and discussions I laid out in chapter 1 and in which I argued firstly that it is urgent and necessary to rethink in a European context the critical theories of 'race' and 'whiteness' that are derived from the US. The importance of the distinction between the US and European contexts has been pointed out by several postcolonial and 'race' scholars as well (Said 2000, Ponzanesi 2002, Kaufmann 2006). The first problematic is rooted in the different histories of the North American and European continents. The US theoretical tradition is built on the social perception of a colour-line which divides the population into a 'black' and 'white' binary representing differently experienced realities. The other of the 'white' man is therefore easily recognisable in the US context as being 'black', and exclusion plays out on the bodily and visible difference. If the colour-line paradigm is transposed unquestioned to the European realm the result is a far-reaching displacement of racism – based entirely on visible

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<sup>143</sup> Moreover, the causal argument stated by Carens is not the only explanation of the binary construction of the debates and the controversy. It can also be said that much of the conflicts feeding the debates were based on confusion about the concept of *multiculturalism*. In this relation Bhikhu Parekh (2008) writes: 'For some it means treating each cultural community as a world unto itself and involves cultural relativism. For others including myself [Parekh], it means that no culture is perfect and that it benefits from a critical dialogue with others, and involves a rejection of relativism.' (Parekh 2008: footnote number 7). Paul Gilroy's (2003, 2005) concept of *conviviality* rather than *multiculturalism*, which amounts to a definition very close to Parekh's second statement in the quote above, is helpful. The discussions about the different definitions of multiculturalism surfaces throughout this case study, but they are not the main topic of this analysis and they will therefore not be developed further.



differences – to the US context. Both Hansen and O’Leary argue in the special issue of *International Migration* (Modood et al. 2006) that in the case of the Danish cartoons it is necessary to make a ‘distinction between racism and religious hatred’ (Hansen in Modood et al 2006: 12). The cartoons are not racist, they argue, because they did not allude to colour differences (O’Leary in Modood et al 2006: 26).<sup>144</sup> If racism is defined thus by a colour-line between ‘white’ and ‘black’ then discriminatory and hateful behaviour towards religious and ethnic minorities in Europe is not racism. It follows from Hansen’s argument that there is a sort of hierarchy between what is racist and what is simply ‘religious hatred’ and that racism is solely determined by a colour difference.

In chapter 1 I followed Braidotti and Griffin (2002) and wrote that, in a European context, ethnicity, religious belonging, nationality and race are constantly conflated and co-construct multi-layered forms of discrimination (Griffin and Braidotti 2002). So, the second problematic arising from a transference of US colour-line rhetoric to the European discussions on ‘race’ and ‘whiteness’ is the ambiguity between ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’. That is, what is considered ‘white’ and by which parameters is ‘whiteness’ measured? The hierarchical distinction between racial and religious hatred prove unhelpful. Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1996) and Goldberg (2006) among others have attempted to theorise that the lines between ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ and additionally religion may be conceived of alongside these issues in the light of historical events which have shaped the formations of the European continent through war, conquest, inquisition and genocide. It would seem impossible in a European and thus Danish context to look at ‘race’ – in terms of inclusions and exclusions from communities – without including religion in these socio-political structures. The underlying structures of Danish social and cultural identity and their reliance on an invisible and all-pervasive idea of ‘whiteness’ and Lutheran Protestantism call on me to look at the Danish social imaginary and its functions during the cartoon controversy.

### 3.2.1 *Postcolonial relation*

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<sup>144</sup> It would also seem that O’Leary thinks that the cartoons are not racist because Arabs are racists too.



Taking my starting point in postcolonial theory I want to point to the work of Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak to illuminate my views of the cartoon controversy and its Danish foundations. Edward Said (2000 (1983)) asserts that, in the American academy today, literature and physical events are separated, but in fact texts are themselves events and always worldly in the sense that they affiliate themselves with historical moments and the social world – human lives. Criticism and critical consciousness should take account of ‘the realities of power and authority – as well as resistances offered by men, women, and social movements to institutions, authorities, and orthodoxies’. These are, Said believes, ‘the realities that make texts possible’ (Said 2000 (1983): 223). The critique of academia may be outdated mainly due to Said’s own influence in the field and again the US parameters leave out the European context. Nevertheless the theoretical framework which Said proposes is still relevant. The sort of ‘secular criticism’ which Said suggests has to take its position outside the institutional hegemonic culture of academia founded in dominant ‘western’ culture. A dislocation or decentring is needed. Said uses the term ‘culture’ to illustrate the hegemonic power which remains unquestioned and which needs to be scrutinised in a secular criticism. In academic criticism, ‘culture’ is the ‘grid of research techniques and ethics by which prevailing culture imposes on the individual scholar its canons ...’ (Said 2000 (1983): 227). This ‘system of values *saturat[es]* downward almost everything within its purview’ (Said 2000 (1983): 227) yet it does not include nor is it available to everybody, some are outside ‘our’ culture. This is a particularly relevant criticism in relation to the journalistic and media-saturated culture of contemporary ‘western’ society. Because of extensive access and circulation, the media may produce and uphold mainstream ideological constructs – such as ‘Danish identity’ – while passing them off as naturalised, ‘objective’ canons and standards. This is what I have previously identified as the mediated social imaginary sustained by journalistic cultural memories (chapter 2). Said speaks of the academic knowledge merely mediated through the press, but I want to acknowledge the knowledge produced by and the hegemonising power of journalism and journalist-subjects themselves. That is the power to generate and transmit ‘a continual process of reinforcement, by which the hegemonic culture will add to itself the prerogatives given it by its sense of national identity, its power as an implement, ally, or branch of the state’ (Said 2000: 228). This means that the subject is held in a tension between the awareness of its collective belonging and ‘a worldly self-situating, a sensitive response to the



dominant culture' (Said 2000: 230). That is, the (journalist-)subject is also 'a historical and social actor' in the culture. (Said 2000: 230). What Said ultimately calls for is a criticism which is always situated, sceptical and secular, and reflectively open to its own failings (Said 2000: 241).

I understand Said's 'culture' (and in what follows Spivak's 'ideology') as always already 'media-ted'. In chapter 2 I developed a terminology of how this – in my words – social imaginary is constructed partly through journalistic (re)production of certain cultural memories. These journalistic cultural memories construct an 'us' and are further sustained through non-memories or by neglected memories such as, for instance, the cultural memories of Danish slavery and the slave trade (case study 1). Said's double pull, or tension between the awareness of the subject's embeddedness and simultaneous situated reflection upon this embeddedness, calls upon a comparison to another major hegemonic representation in 'western' culture and politics: namely, that of 'whiteness' and 'white' supremacy.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988a) uses a blend of deconstruction and gendered postcolonial theory as her way into a critique of unacknowledged 'white', masculine hegemony in the US. This is a hegemonic assumption, which does not spare allegedly radical epistemologies like feminism, she argues. Spivak's critique supports African-American race scholars but also critiques the 'bourgeois feminists' in the US for not recognising the differences between the US gendered and racial context and that of other cultural – or (as Spivak probably would prefer) 'ideological' – settings. The problem with US feminism, Spivak asserts, 'is its identification of racism as such with the constitution of racism in America' (Spivak 1988a: 81). That is, the generalisations about the world are based on unrecognised ideological US frameworks. Spivak identifies the hegemony of 'white' feminism to be superimposed onto the context of 'the third world woman'. In a Derridean mode, Spivak calls for an explicit theory of ideology in order to deconstruct the cultural assumptions of US commonsense (Spivak 1988b: 119). Spivak's work calls for a 'displacement' in the form of a pedagogical practice which confronts students with these ideological presuppositions. It is a way of un-learning privilege in order to take another and more empathetic position. In the case of the cartoon controversy, Spivak's approach points to – what I would call –



secular illiteracy that needs to be called to awareness in order to be replaced by a more empathetic position.

Secular illiteracy exposes the lack of self-reflexivity and awareness of ‘western’ assumptions. The un-learning of these assumptions could very well be expressed in the ‘cracks’ of hegemonic culture or as ‘third space’, as theorised by Homi Bhabha (Bhabha 1994). It is however, also a space for feminist subjectivity to take centre stage in the sense of Braidotti’s poststructuralist idea of ‘transversal subjectivity’ (Braidotti 2006: 131-2). Along with Saba Mahmood’s (2005) research on the Islamic Piety Movement, in which female Moslems use religious submission to express and exert agency, feminist debates about the nature of female subjectivity have resurfaced. In her critique of Foucault, Lois McNay (2000) argues that the notion of subjectivity leaves the embodied subject docile and subjectivity remains a negative exercise of resistance. McNay thus prefers the terminology of ‘agency’, which she sees as encompassing a generative power potential. As I argued in chapter 1, rather than choosing the sociological approach engaging Bourdieu’s *habitus* and notion of *the field*, Braidotti (2006) renegotiates the Foucauldian subjectivity using the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari to explode the dichotomous positions of resistance versus oppression. Subjectivity means a subject which continuously constitutes relations of power. That is, an agency which allows the subject to be affected and embodied as part of his or her constitution. It is a process rather than a static identity formation. The ‘transversal subject’ is a rethinking of the nomadic subjectivity (Braidotti 1994) which structurally and ethically complicates the latter in terms of politics of ethnicity, gender and human reproduction. Both McNay and Braidotti emphasise the complexity of subject identity, which is ‘durable but not immutable’ (McNay 2000). However, Braidotti’s further emphasis on the ethical aspect of such a subjectivity makes her theory particularly relevant to the context of the cartoon controversy and to my call for an ethical response. The point is that both Braidotti and McNay seek to exert a possibility for change within the social imaginary. But before I move on to the possibility of journalistic cosmopolitan ethics, I need to unfold my claim about secular illiteracy in the Danish cartoon controversy further by way of connecting it to an argument about Christianity’s dominant position and relation to that of ‘whiteness’.

### 3.2.2 *The secular face of Denmark*



I want to dwell a bit on particularities of the Danish social imaginary and the ‘western’ liberal assumptions embedded within it in order to substantiate my claim of Danish secular illiteracy. Said’s point about a reflective view on ‘our’ own ‘culture’, as well as Spivak’s call for explicitness about hegemonic ‘ideologies’ both deal with the invisibility and hence taken-for-grantedness of ‘western’ ‘white’ and, I will argue, secular politics. I proceed by turning my attention to ‘secular Denmark’, arguing that the Danish social imaginary – ‘culture’ or ‘ideology’ – provides a mode of naturalising and privatising religion to the extreme point of invisibility. I am using the term ‘secularity’ to mean the political division of church and state which refers religion to the private sphere. I use the term ‘secularism’ when I speak of the political ideology which rejects all religious symbols and manifestations. To my knowledge no ‘western’ or ‘non-western’ country practices political secularism, though many individual Europeans confess to this line of thought. The French principle of *laïcité* may reject all religious manifestations in the public sphere, but the government still allows the people to practise their faith at home and in certain designated places – such as churches, synagogues and mosques. In Germany many public nursing homes and nurseries are run by state-authorised churches. In Denmark, as I will show in detail below, political secularity does not hinder the possibility of a state-administered public church. However, in theory, secularity assumes a decisive split between public and private lives. This split may be difficult to uphold especially when we move into the realm and practice of journalist-subjects, as I argued in chapter 2 and to which I will return below. While secularity in praxis takes many different forms, political secularism can be seen as a sort of totalitarianism, a political wish for annihilation of religious ‘superstition’ and instead a wish to promote a state based on ‘pure reason’. It is important to keep the definitions of the two terms and their differences in praxis in mind when dealing with the debates emanating from the cartoon controversy.<sup>145</sup>

As a secular country, Denmark has freedom of religion but not financial and political equality of religion, which means that the Danish people’s church (*Folkekirken*) is the Lutheran Protestant Church, its status enshrined in the Danish Constitution. The Church is funded through taxes and is governed by its own ministry in parliament, although the government minister of the Church Ministry in reality often leaves the

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<sup>145</sup> At times the differences between the terms may seem to raise some confusion among the contributors to the debate because few scholars take the time to define their terminology on this issue.



governing of the Church's business to the clerical leaders. The vast majority of the Danish population (83.1 per cent) are members of the Lutheran Protestant church<sup>146</sup>, though you would not know it by the empty pews at the sermons on Sundays, which less than 3 per cent of the members of the Church attend. Membership is gained automatically at baptism and is paid for by a tax of 1–1.5 per cent of the members' income. Relinquishing membership is possible by arrangement with the local parish priest. The number of members, however, is considered stable mainly due to demographics: the large number of the younger generation not baptised is set off by the longer life-expectancy of the older generation, who are mostly members of the Church (Iversen 2006). It is estimated that over one-fifth of Danes put their faith in astrology and various New Age religious practices (Jensen 1998) and deal with moral dilemmas with the help of narratives from popular cinema films (Iversen 2006) rather than Biblical citations. Despite the financial and political differences involved, all religions are considered culturally equal, though the Christian heritage of the country cannot be denied. Thus, schools and work places close for Christmas, not for Yom Kippur or Ramadan, and, as described above, the Danish passport sports a detail from the Jelling monument, the first Danish reproduction of the image of the crucifixion chiselled into a gigantic stone raised in the tenth century.<sup>147</sup> In this way – as well as in politically more potent ways, to which I will return shortly – Christianity always occupies a privileged position and is ubiquitous, though hardly noticeable – at least not to the (Christian) Danes.

As is often the case in liberal societies (though in the light of the state structure of the Church in Denmark, perhaps paradoxically), in Denmark faith is seen as a personal or individual choice and as being far from connected to any doctrine or belief system. On an individual level this is evident in the fact that most Danes believe in 'God as a spiritual power in man, or maybe God as a good person' (Iversen 2006: 81). As a Danish priest explains it: 'God is dead and that is good. Therefore we can come close to the man from Nazareth without running the risk of assault. He is a brother only.' (Iversen 2006: 81). However, the fact that religion is rendered personal to the extent that God can be pronounced dead by a priest does not mean that the Danes inhabit a

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<sup>146</sup> <http://www.km.dk/> (official website for the ministry of the Danish Lutheran Church).

<sup>147</sup> See case study 2, above, for a description of the connotations related to this runic stone and its motif.



multitude of belief systems. Far from it, most Danes ‘choose’ their religion within the known Christian paradigm, where the Christian God is still the primary figure (Iversen 2006: 81). In chapter 2 I discussed how journalists, like most of the Danish population, internalise their Lutheran Protestant beliefs unconsciously and with little interest in the consequences (Jensen 2006a: 132).

On a political level the private nature of religion in Denmark is founded in Scandinavian history<sup>148</sup> and politics which – like most of Europe – advance a liberal belief in the rights of the individual. The unacknowledged, or indeed ignored, conflation between the private and public sphere in religion is expressed further through the discussion accompanying the cartoon controversy. While the debate was still very tense in the late spring of 2006 in Denmark, most Danes would argue in alignment with the Swedish newspaper *Expressen*<sup>149</sup>:

Defending freedom of expression against fundamentalist threats is a cause. It is a matter of principle, whether it involves Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses*, a film about veils and the oppression of women, or some clumsy drawings in a Danish newspaper.

The comparison presented here soon became popular in the debate, and the notion of anybody questioning the internal guidelines of freedom of expression or of speech was seen as fundamentalist and threatening – the cartoon controversy was readily reduced to yet another ‘clash of civilisations’. That is, what Kunelius et al. (2007) call ‘liberal fundamentalism’ was prevalent in parts of the debate. What had previously sustained the social imaginary as invisible ‘glue’ (Braidotti 2002: 143), keeping the Danes and the Danish society within a common structure of identification, suddenly became apparent though not yet challenged or altered.

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<sup>148</sup> The Scandinavian countries have a common political and cultural history, though their political foundations differ and their governments reacted differently to the particular case of the cartoons. However, recently Sweden experienced its own crisis of a similar character when an artist portrayed Mohammed’s face on a dog’s body. The controversy did not reach the same extremes as the Danish counterpart. One reason, I believe, is the nature of Sweden’s political climate, which differs quite dramatically from the Danish when it comes to debates about migrants etc. I realise the discrepancy but believe that to a large extent the Scandinavian countries share a cultural identity and imaginary, which will become apparent. Where nothing else is noted I am analysing Denmark alone.

<sup>149</sup> Quoted on the Christian website, Christian Science Monitor:  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0201/dailyUpdate.html>.



Referring to the Enlightenment as the point in time which separates the Danish democracy from the Moslem faith, the message accompanying the cartoons in *Jyllands-Posten* was clear: Denmark is a modern democratic society and Moslems are traditional and religious people, and more importantly, the two do not go together (Jerichow and Rode 2006). In the words of the Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, ‘In Denmark freedom of speech is sacred’ (Iversen 2006). As in the case of the journalists, who unconsciously internalise their Protestant Lutheran beliefs (Jensen 2006a), the Christian religious foundations of freedom of expression also seem to surface in the vocabulary of the Danish Prime Minister. In this way Fogh Andersen drew an analogy to ‘religion, making [if not] nationalism and patriotism out to be a religion’ then at least ‘modernity’ and ‘freedom of speech [the religion] of modern times’ (Balibar 2002). While critique of Islam was structured around a critique of the emotional and irrational response of Moslems to the publication of the cartoons, the blind trust in ‘freedom of expression’ was unproblematically heralded as the rational choice grounded in universal reason. This argument I believe is sustained through the link between freedom of expression and the idea of objectivity – that is, a universal neutral standpoint, which I described in chapter 2. Bhikhu Parekh (2008) has advanced a similar point; the claim that liberal values sustain ‘the only universally valid form of good society’ (Parekh 2008:26) leads to the view that Moslems are ‘being irrational, morally obtuse, [and] backward’ (Parekh 2008: 26). Parekh (2008) argues that the anxiety felt by the secular liberals in relation to the cartoon controversy and many of the other so-called ‘clashes of civilisations’ comes not from the religiousness of the Moslems – because though disguised in secular vocabularies the ‘west’ is based on religion too – but from the ‘unfamiliarity’ in connection to the secular vocabulary (Parekh 2008: 26). ‘Rather [than introducing an alien element to the secular society the religious groups] speak loudly in the same language which the rest of society speaks in a quiet whisper’ (Parekh 2008: 22).

The combination of a belief that ‘[t]o many Danes...“Christianity” [is equated with and therefore] only means “Danish culture”’ (Iversen 2006: 87) with strong liberalist rhetoric supported the *Jyllands-Posten* editors’ lack of interest in the possible



emotions and reactions that would follow the printing of the cartoons.<sup>150</sup> When even Danish self-proclaimed atheists in the political debates tend to see Christianity in the Lutheran tradition as the ‘supreme religion’ (Iversen 2006: 87) we come to a paradoxical definition: Christianity, i.e., Lutheran Protestantism, is everything (i.e. synonymous with the Danish culture) and nothing (irrelevant to a secular society) at the same time.

### *3.2.3 Gender – equality and sameness*

One of the universal ideas of secular liberal discourse is one of equality. In chapter 1 I outlined the problems involved in the argument put forth in the manifesto and I called for tentativeness when dealing with secularity and gendered subjectivity as an argument for secular equality. What I am illustrating in this case study are some of the hidden structures of how Danish identity was imagined and constructed during the cartoon controversy. These structures are furthermore connected to the way in which gender equality operates in Danish society and in relation to the liberal claim to common identity and tolerance, to which I will return.

The liberal Enlightenment rhetoric came alive in the manifesto against totalitarianism, which I discussed in chapter 1. The manifesto was authored and signed by prominent writers and cultural personalities with migrant backgrounds.<sup>151</sup> It drew strong parallels between women’s subjugation by men and the ‘west’s’ subjugation to Islam in the same vein as described above. The ‘west’, the manifesto argued, should fight for equality, freedom and secular values. But the comparative relation between the gendered role of the ‘west’ and the generic use of the term ‘women’ is a reduction of the issues. In the following I make the argument that the liberal claim of equality during the cartoon controversy was integrated in the binary discourse of ‘them’ and ‘us’ in such a way that gendered identities were erased.

The Scandinavian countries are arguably advanced when it comes to gender equality, in the public as well as in the private sphere. However, the media has been persistent in portraying migrant women as victims of Moslem patriarchy for the last thirty years

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<sup>150</sup> The editors had discussed the issue with a scholar of comparative religion, Tim Jensen (Jensen 2006b), beforehand.

<sup>151</sup> See footnote number 24 above



and thereby supported the implicit idea of the equality of ethnically Danish women and men (Andreassen 2005). This well-known discourse, about the unequal and oppressed migrant woman versus the liberated Danish (and otherwise 'western') woman, helped make it possible for the Danish (male) politician Troels Lund Petersen (Liberal Party) to claim that future political work on equality should focus on creating equality for migrant women alone because 'the Danish women's movement has had an enormous victory' (Andreassen 2005). This discourse was also the only one readily available on the issue of gender in the cartoon controversy. The focus of the Danish media contributed to making structural gender inequality and discrimination in Denmark invisible (Andreassen 2005).

The cartoon controversy was devoid of women and female representations, except for the mentioning of symbolic stereotypes – and even they were to a large extent absent. The categories of 'us' and 'them' were portrayed as un-gendered ('us' versus 'them') or in the masculine (the Enlightenment philosophers versus Mohammed and the Moslem imams). I suggested above that this supposed gender neutrality came about through a discourse which rendered Danish gender discrimination invisible. In the same vein, Wendy Brown (2006) argues that the assimilation of sexual difference comes about via a discourse which perpetuates a subordination of women to men through a division of labour across a set of public/private distinctions (Brown 2006: 76). This is why the liberal discourse of equality can take on the form of sameness rather than of difference, which would have to be tolerated, Brown argues. I will return to the issue of tolerance below. But if equality assumes sameness rather than differences, on what grounds are men and women perceived as the same? Equality is of course both financial and political and the two definitions are often interrelated. Danish society prides itself of its high level of equality. However, if equality is measured in the sizes of pay cheques, Danish men and women cannot be considered equal in terms of social and economical status. Danish women do not earn the same amount of money as Danish men for the same amount of work. Similarly, though Danish women have entered many fields of education and professions, they remain absent from powerful job positions and the job market is fiercely segregated between male-dominated areas and female-dominated areas. Financial inequality influences cultural and educational capital and equality. Thus, what is at stake is a kind of equality which allows women to express themselves within the masculine structure of



the labour market. Similarly to the argument put forward in the introduction to this case study, in my view, equality (like freedom of expression) is not achieved by adding new content to the same format. That is, limiting gender equality to admittance of women in male-dominated discourses generates a claim of sameness of minds or political beliefs rather than equality in financial and political possibilities. The grounds on which men and women are seen as the same are in their liberal views informed by Christian mythology and morals. However, in my view, equality has to emanate from a position of difference if it is to have any real meaning at all (Wekker 2006: 21).

As the quote by Lund Petersen above shows, Danish gender discrimination is no longer viewed as a political and social issue, despite the difference in wages and women's positions in the job market. The invisibility of gender issues in the Danish public debates may be assumed to originate in the fact that all – men and women – are seen as possessing the same (liberal) values, interests and understandings of the society. That is, women and men are perceived as belonging to a common Danish identity which 'over-rules', for instance, gendered identities and makes financial and employment equality no longer matter. Brown's argument that the structure of female subordination is such that assimilation is possible while differentiation continues, holds true in the context of Danish gender politics. Also, in relation to the cartoon controversy, Danish society was consequently described as 'valuing equality between men and women' (Jerichow and Rode 2006), whereas descriptions of the Moslem communities mentioned male domination over women as a leading motif. Danish women are assumed to have the same liberal understanding and experience of Danish society as men and the general media. The conflation of meanings of the two distinct terms, *equal* and *the same*, provides a space for a unified 'us', which is helpful if a distinction between 'us' and 'them' is the goal of the discourse. The aforementioned *Manifesto: Together facing the new totalitarianism* clearly shows that, in order for an analogy between Islam and patriarchal oppression to work according to the intentions of the manifesto, the notion of 'western' patriarchy has to be done away with somehow. In this way, gender equality no longer functions through an understanding of distinctions between men and women, but rather as a symbol for the distinctions between 'them' and 'us'.



A final structure of equality is produced through difference in sexual preferences. Politically the Danish People's Party has argued for an unprejudiced position in relation to sexual minorities.<sup>152</sup> Homosexuality, trans-sexuality and cross-dressing identities were never an electorally-charged political topic in Denmark before the cartoon controversy, however, they have now emerged as particular Danish common modes of interacting. Tolerance of sexual minorities is offered in order to express particular Danishness: 'Fags are the new white', as media scholar and historian Rikke Andreassen argues.<sup>153</sup> That is, 'we' tolerate homosexuality, 'they' do not.

In chapter 1 I wrote that cultural, political and academic debates about national identity and belonging are often linked to women and to the female body. National identity is naturalised and women are presented as mediators of the national identity. Women belonging to an othered nation may be represented as bodily degenerates, and men belonging to an othered ethnic and/or religious group may be represented in a feminised manner. Neither of these examples were the case in the cartoon controversy. Instead liberal accounts of freedom of expression and liberal politics defined the Danish culture as a unanimous and ungendered entity. It was the heritage of the 'white' masculine and rational traditions of the Enlightenment which defined Denmark and the 'west' as gender neutral. Moreover, the ethnic and/or religious othered women were hardly visible in the debate.

### 3.3 SECULAR ILLITERACY AND THE INVISIBILITY OF 'WHITENESS'

What emerges in these entangled and interdependent structures of 'race', secularism, religion, gender and sexuality is a rarely explored parallel between the naturalisation of secularity and that of 'whiteness'. This leads my focus onto the academic field which critically investigates representations and implications of a naturalised 'white' hegemony and supremacy. The cartoon controversy has often been compared to and discussed in line with the debates about the Moslem head-scarf prohibition in France

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<sup>152</sup> From the newsletter of The Danish People's Party 24. November 2003: [www.danskfolkeparti.dk/Giv\\_os\\_Nørrebro\\_tilbage....asp](http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk/Giv_os_Nørrebro_tilbage....asp). However, members of the party also hold that homosexuals are suffering from an illness and should be helped.

<sup>153</sup> Rikke Andreassen: 'Fags are the new White'. Paper given at the Annual Gender Conference *Hvidhed og andre majoriserende bevægelser* in Copenhagen, Denmark 26. April 2008. Organised by Foreningen for Kønsforskning og Forskningsenheden for Læringskultur, subjektivisering og diversitet (DPU)



and the *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie<sup>154</sup>, but I want to introduce briefly another analogous case to the cartoon controversy, from Norway. This case began when a Norwegian African man rejected the term *neger*, which is the Norwegian version of *negro*. This is a case which takes the interpretation of the controversy into the realm of the unacknowledged normativity of ‘whiteness’ and in this way further the arguments made above while taking them in a less rehearsed direction.

### 3.3.1 The ‘racial’ face of Denmark

As discussed in chapter 1, the field of critical ‘whiteness’ studies is fast expanding and it encompasses several academic and activist disciplines that recognise ‘whiteness’ as a political, economical, social and cultural structure of power and ‘white’ supremacy. The field also presents a US bias as argued earlier. Richard Dyer’s (1997) work on the representation of ‘whiteness’ in cultural products such as films, television commercials and other advertisements argues that in ‘western’ countries skin colour, and in particular the symbolic importance of the colour ‘white’, through media, literature and art, has become the norm of human representation. In this normative state, ‘whiteness’ can remain perceived as inconsequential and even invisible. Moreover, the normativity is re-established by (re)drawing and naturalising boundaries between ‘white’ and ‘non-white’.

This produces a sort of ignorance, which makes a basis of internalised racism and hegemonic assumptions possible, because it deters understanding of ‘other’ or ‘othered’ subjectivities. Following Spivak I want to turn to a feature of Danish – and perhaps Scandinavian – culture or ideology, which in my opinion needs to be ‘unlearned’. Like Spivak I do not wish to suggest that if only we knew more the Danish society, among others, would be a better place, because the question of whose teaching should be taught immediately emerges. I wish to use the term ignorance in a foundational form, from Latin *ignorare*, encompassing both the lack of knowledge and the rejection of knowledge, that is, to ignore. What is needed then is not simply knowledge, which can be ignored at will and politically controlled, but a persuasive literacy about the historical links between secularity, (Protestant) Christianity and ‘racial’ ‘whiteness’. We need generative and transversal subjectivity to ‘unlearn’ the

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<sup>154</sup> I return to the similarities between the case of the cartoons and of *The Satanic Verses* below.



internalised or unconscious processes first. What is at stake when the meanings of Protestantism and ‘white’ privilege are ignored is a secular illiteracy, an inability to read and understand the strands of the secular and enlightened ‘western’ society. Lucius T. Outlaw Jr (2005) makes a similar call for a re-education and redirection towards a more inclusive knowledge production within the field of philosophical teachings. ‘White’ supremacy, he argues, teaches on the one hand knowledge, which is highly restricted and limited to the works of ‘white’ people, often men, and on the other hand it teaches ignorance of knowledge production of ‘non-white’ people. What Outlaw calls for then is a narrative of the other story to be told alongside the normative, ‘white’ story. The wrongful education stems from ‘white’ supremacy and hegemony, which generates a social ordering and systemic production of ignorance (Outlaw 2005).

In the case of a racial-linguistic dispute about the use of the Norwegian word *neger* in 2000-1, Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad (2005) argues that the debate in Norway on the use of the term *neger* in the Norwegian language was based on a defence of normative and habitual thinking. The defence re-installed the Norwegian self-image as a nation of ‘rugged egalitarian individualism and innocence’ (Gullestad 2005: 44). The term *neger* is perceived by most Norwegians as neutral, because admitting otherwise would ‘imply accepting the accusation that Norway was part of the Europe who, in the words of the Norwegian African man initiating the debate, once treated blacks “like animals and a pest”’ (Gullestad 2005: 40).<sup>155</sup> The Norwegian African man objected to being called *neger* by ‘white’ Norwegians. I want to suggest that in the case of the Mohammed cartoons, Lutheran Christianity shares that normative place of ‘whiteness’ which is simultaneously everything and nothing (Dyer 1997) in relation to the Scandinavian identity. Despite the differences in the two cases<sup>156</sup> there are similarities in the reception of the debates in the Nordic public sphere. In my interpretation the Danish debate, like that of the Norwegian, came to

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<sup>155</sup> Norway was part of Denmark during the colonial era of the Virgin Islands. Norway could, therefore, be considered a colony of Denmark as well.

<sup>156</sup> The Norwegian case was initiated by an individual representative of a minority group, it was concerned with what was considered an everyday and everyman’s term, and it was confined within the Norwegian debates in which (the rest of) Europe was perceived in negative terms. In contrast, the Danish cartoon controversy was initiated by a national newspaper, and dealt with issues of freedom of expression, the power of the media and the political – domestic and foreign – situation. Subsequently the case had consequences throughout most of the world. Denmark related itself to a European tradition.



focus on naturalising an aspect of Danish culture – the culture of freedom of expression and embedded within Christianity – which was vehemently separated from that of the ‘Moslem culture’ in order to justify indecent behaviour and publication of obviously provocative cartoons. As Gullestad puts it aptly and with a pinch of irony: ‘In this [Norwegian] debate [about the use of the term *neger*] common decency was obviously opposed to other important concerns’ (Gullestad 2005: 40). ‘Other important concerns’ in the case of the cartoons (as in the case of the use of the term *neger* in Norway) were to uphold the normative position of what was considered unchallengeable in Danish culture. Challenging the normative knowledge claim by accepting another embodiment of experiencing the interpellating power of the word *neger* or of the religious embodiment of faith was too painful for the Danish as well as the Norwegian production of social imaginary.

### 3.3.2 Cultural non-memory: The ignored and forgotten memories

At the time of the publication of the cartoons, the Danish government was in the process of waging a ‘culture war’ against Moslem norms and thinking.<sup>157</sup> In the words of the Minister of Cultural Affairs, Brian Mikkelsen, ‘the Danish cultural heritage’ was up against ‘Moslem norms and ways of thought’ (Klausen 2006). As this political idea is on the rise across Europe it is perhaps not surprising that newspapers in several European countries followed the Danish example and printed the cartoons. The countries that did not follow suit immediately were the UK<sup>158</sup> and the US. Though the US and the UK are utterly different in their colonial histories and political dealings with others, both countries have painful histories of acknowledging their heterogeneousness, and violent histories based, for instance, in widespread colonialism and slavery.<sup>159</sup> In stark contrast, one commentator in the Danish Christian online debate and news forum connected to the national newspaper *Kristeligt Dagblad* wrote that the Danes do not feel the same collective guilt towards former colonies, because the Danish colonial past seems further away and less bloody, and because it is

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<sup>157</sup> Denmark was also engaged in military action in Iraq next to the US.

<sup>158</sup> The British network Channel 4 did however show a partial representation of the cartoons in its news coverage of the case.

<sup>159</sup> A comparative analysis of the two countries’ histories, their crossroads and differences is obviously beyond the scope of this dissertation. Suffice it to say that in the case of the cartoons, the UK and US governments stood out as being more hesitant than most other continental European governments on the question of whether or not – and particularly why or why not – to publish the cartoons. It has furthermore been suggested that the Britons had ‘learnt their lesson’ in the Rushdie case less than twenty years previously (Modood et al 2006).



not a Danish cultural trait to feel collective guilt. Thus, ‘the Danes do not feel guilty towards Africans because they are white or because they are Europeans simply because other white people or other Europeans abused African slaves’ (Madsen 2006).<sup>160</sup> According to Madsen, it would seem that this lack of guilt could be construed as racist behaviour by foreigners uninformed about the Danish way of life. Ellebæk Madsen is giving blatantly inaccurate information: As mentioned several times in this dissertation, as well as analysed in depth in case studies 1 and 2, Denmark was the coloniser of large parts of the north at various periods of time (including Iceland, Greenland, The Faeroe Islands, and Norway) until after the Second World War and held colonies in the Caribbean, as well as (in what is today the nations of) southern Ghana and eastern India. As Said among others has pointed out, Europe and the Europeans are defined through the meeting with the other, but Denmark has been able to suspend the discourse on and the representation of this encounter, perhaps because the number of Caribbean freed slaves coming to Denmark was less than can be counted on one hand, or perhaps because the colonial history has been silenced. That is, the lack of a physical experience of and encounter with descendants of slaves – i.e., an embodied experience of slavery history – have allowed a cultural non-memory to take hold and to be reproduced through a silencing of these historical events in the educational system, as well as in the journalistic cultural memories. This suspension has kept the Danes feeling guilt-free and made the colonies *seem* further away and *seem* less bloody. However, it should be noted again that Denmark was the seventh largest slave-trading nation during colonial times, with the US in sixth place (Gøbel 1996), though this fact is invisible to the Danes and has been kept that way.<sup>161</sup> I would suggest that Danish colonial history has been neglected as part of the national history, concealed in the social imaginary or culture to the extent that the Danes have been able to blot out those others who helped to accumulate the wealth through colonialism that allowed Denmark to construct the modern welfare state. In so doing, these ignored and neglected others defined by negation the European-ness of the Europeans, thus including the Danes.

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<sup>160</sup> <http://www.religion.dk/religionsdebatten:ktg=kristendom:aid=281303>. My translation from:

‘Danskerne føler sig ikke skyldige som hvide eller europæere over for afrikanere, bare fordi andre hvide mennesker eller andre europæere har mishandlet afrikanske slaver.’

<sup>161</sup> There are, for instance, no monuments commemorating and acknowledging slavery in Denmark. In Norway, however, a monument has been raised, as well as in the former Danish-Norwegian colonies in the Virgin Islands.



Danish journalists also fight uphill battles when undertaking interesting and culturally relevant work on, for instance, descendants of Danish slaves (Larsen 2005), as analysed in case study 2. In general, Denmark (like Norway) is reluctant to see itself as part of the colonising and enslaving Europe, though very eager to be part of the secular and enlightened Europe. Norwegian self-proclaimed feminist, Hege Storhaug (Fekete 2006), goes even further in denouncing the need for what I would define as ‘white’ and secular literacy on the topic of Nordic colonial history. Storhaug attributes the lack of historical guilt to the Norwegian talent of ‘shak[ing] off false multiculturalism’ (Fekete 2006). Multiculturalism is represented by Storhaug as misguided understanding of cultures other than the ‘western’. Freedom of religion – and religion often conflated with culture as argued above – is hereby placed in a hierarchical and less important role in relation to the concept of freedom of expression, and the latter is presented as a foundational ‘western’ European secular value. Storhaug even sees the ability to forget (that is, the existence of a non-memory) as a strength, which helps the Nordic countries reject multiculturalism. Guilty feelings make countries like France and the UK accept everything uncritically, Storhaug argues, and I will argue below that the quest for a cultural canon undertaken by the editor Flemming Rose and the Danish Minister of Cultural Affairs also follow Storhaug’s stance to a large extent. In this sense (both rejecting and internalising Europeanisation) Denmark – or perhaps Scandinavia as a whole – succeeds in appearing ‘white’ and religiously homogeneous to itself, and thereby making the unsaid and the power of the common sense even stronger than in European countries such as France and the UK as well as Germany, which because of the Second World War rather than colonialism, questions its relations with others.

This Scandinavian position is secular illiteracy, and it points to the omission of another potential narrative, and subjectivities generating cracks in the discourse, about Nordic history and culture, as Gullestad (2005) also recognises. The dominant narratives of the national identification as founded on innocence, humanism, tolerance and anti-racism are based partly on selective facts, Gullestad asserts, but partly also on disregarding other facts of colonial oppression, like slavery and Protestant supremacy. Gilroy (2006) calls it agno-politics or agnotology, which is a form of structural blindness and which produces ‘new racism’ rather than overt racism. It is not only a lack of guilt, but also certainly a lack of acknowledgement. I call it a cultural non-



memory or secular illiteracy, which allows for both an ethical as well as an epistemological critique of the practice of exclusion of knowledge and of knowledge claims. Gullestad (2005) points out that the Norwegian perception of racism is not of a structural kind, but it is rather seen as an individual act by racist people. This particular perception has implications for the public debates around both the aforementioned term *neger* and the cartoon controversy in the Nordic region. In my reading, the individualisation of racist behaviour is mirrored in the individualisation of religiousness in Denmark. Both render invisible the cultural, societal, economic and political structures of racial relations and thus also the exclusions, which are actively present in most European societies, including Norway and Denmark.

### 3.4 GLOBAL TOLERANCE OR COSMOPOLITAN ETHICS

The last section of this case study of the cartoon controversy returns to the significance of the journalistic practice and production of the case and the controversy and on the ethical concepts heralded as ‘western’ and journalistic prerogatives by cultural editor Flemming Rose and others. I want to discuss the ethical parameters of freedom of expression in relation to the case and in order to do that I invoke debates about tolerance and hospitality. Taking these discussions into the global realm of the cartoon controversy, the postcolonial theories I introduced above and their practical appropriations and consequences fall short of cosmopolitan ethics. I therefore turn to Braidotti’s transversal subjectivities which will inform these final pages. Despite the ‘global’ movements and reach of the cartoon controversy and the discussions and discourses that followed, discussions on cosmopolitan ethics based on tolerance and hospitality and their Christian foundations (Peters 2005) were neglected. In this final section I will address the reason for this and how cosmopolitan ethics can be developed in light of journalistic practice and transversal subjectivities.

#### 3.4.1 *Rose and Ramadan*

Public intellectual and founder of what has been named Euro-Islam, Tariq Ramadan, in 2006 posed the question<sup>162</sup> if

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<sup>162</sup> *The Guardian* online: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2006/feb/06/homeaffairs.comment>, accessed 20 July 2008



[i]nstead of being obsessed with laws and rights – approaching a tyrannical right to say anything – would it not be more prudent to call upon citizens to exercise their right to freedom of expression responsibly and to take into account the diverse sensitivities that compose our pluralistic contemporary societies?

In line with Parekh, who argues that Moslems ‘do not question the value of free speech but rather its scope and limits’ (Parekh 2008: 20), Ramadan believes that the cartoon controversy is less about freedom of expression and more about civic responsibilities.<sup>163</sup> Democracy is not simply about majority rule, but likewise about civil rights and liberties. Recently Flemming Rose repeated in an interview that to him the lesson to be learnt from the cartoon controversy was about holding on to the liberal values of individualism, equality and freedom of expression on a global scale (Kastrup 2008). Rose regards ‘the multicultural project’ as a project forging relativism and a failed project but one which ‘has resulted in group rights which really pisses [Rose] off’ (Kastrup 2008). Rose apparently does not see democracy as building on civil liberties but rather on majority rule, which relative relations between multiple cultures cannot sustain.<sup>164</sup> When the Danish weekly newspaper, *Weekendavisen*, brought Ramadan and Rose together to discuss the cartoon controversy in January 2008<sup>165</sup> it therefore resulted in a miscommunication of great proportions. Whereas Ramadan argued for respecting the other, Rose argued for tolerance of the other, which means that he neither needs to understand nor respect the other. Ramadan’s stand has been the subject of much of the theories presented in this chapter – though with different emphases. I now want to pay attention to the liberal secular stand of Rose and the concepts he invokes through the insistence on tolerance rather than respect.

Tolerance is a liberal democratic concept which often is seen as an universalisable concept (Brown 2006: 170). Its potential to become a universal value lies in its

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<sup>163</sup> <http://watandost.blogspot.com/2006/02/tariq-ramadan-on-cartoon-controversy.html> accessed 20 July 2008.

<sup>164</sup> In Parekh’s terminology, introduced earlier, both Storhaug and Rose see multiculturalism as ‘treating each cultural community as a world unto itself and involves cultural relativism’ (Parekh 2008:7fn).

<sup>165</sup> [www.weekendavisen.dk](http://www.weekendavisen.dk) accessed 4 January 2008.



perceived detachment from any cultural communitarian contexts, writes Wendy Brown (2006). That is, in its assumptions of objectivity.

Non-liberal polities are depicted as ‘ruled’ by culture or religion; liberalism is depicted as ruled by law, with culture dispensed to another domain – a depolitized and voluntary one. ... Culture is individual autonomy’s antimony and hence what the liberal state presumes to subdue, depower, and privatize, as well as detach itself from. (Brown 2006: 171)

When Rose is ‘pissed off’ by the mushrooming rights of cultural and religious groups it is because these community-based demands are in conflict with Rose’s idea of liberal government. The ‘demand [for] special treatment [and] insist[ence] that their religious feelings are considered... is incompatible with western democracy and freedom of expression ...’ as Rose put it in the accompanying text to the cartoons in 2005 (Jerichow and Rode 2006, my translation). However, what the cartoon controversy made apparent was not the rights of minorities but rather the cultural basis of liberal law – that which was supposed to be subdued, depowered and privatised. That is, ‘the conflict...exposes the nonuniversal character of liberal legalism and public life: it exposes its cultural dimension’ (Brown 2006: 173) which I have argued for above. The cartoon controversy moreover exposed the Protestant Christian basis of these cultural dimensions. There cannot be a global politics of tolerance except in a fully ‘westernised’ liberal world or through complete colonisation.

Ramadan’s call for respect for civil liberties seems more appropriate to me. It is a call for conviviality, the sense used by Gilroy (2004). Nevertheless, these civil liberties are manifested in legal rights and thus in fleshing out what falls within and what falls outside the rule of law. That is, civil liberties are also based in a form of tolerance (Derrida 2002). Tolerance is furthermore a concept which involves ‘the marking of subjects of tolerance as inferior, deviant, or marginal vis-à-vis those practicing tolerance’ (Brown 2006: 13). It is, so to speak, a practice only available to the powerful or the majority. As already discussed in chapter 3, Derrida (2002) contrasts tolerance with the concept of hospitality which he in turn sees as being unconditional. Unconditional hospitality is hospitality by virtue of its unconditionality. It is a



practically impossible demand and our relation to the other must, then, always vacillate between the laws of rights and unconditional hospitality. The concept of hospitality itself breaks apart the idea of an equal relation to the other in that the role of the host(ess) is connected to the expropriation or dispossession of identity (McNulty 2007).<sup>166</sup> Unconditional hospitality is the absolute surrender of possessions and as such an impossible ideal, hence constant negotiation – *differance* – is necessary to relation. This is not unrelated to Ramadan and Parekh's (2008) stance. Parekh argues: 'The aim [for secular liberal societies] should be *limited* in the sense of defending a particular society rather than prescribing a universal model, and *modest* in the sense of making a good case for it without claiming that no rational man can fail to be convinced by it' (Parekh 2008: 26). That is, rather than stubbornly sticking to universal claims, both sides of the controversy need to let democracy do what it does best, allow space for negotiation and accommodation.

I will return to Derrida's ethical cosmopolitics below, however I first want to argue for the specificity of the cartoon controversy's relation to journalistic practice. As I mentioned above, I see the journalistic practice as a means of focusing upon the liberal democratic ideals of tolerance, hospitality and freedom of expression. However, this lens through which I see and critique liberal practices enables a possibility of change because of the journalistic subjectivities which are transversal subjectivities.

### 3.4.2 *The Rushdie affair in comparison*

The cartoon controversy has often been compared with the case of the *fatwa* against novelist Salman Rushdie in 1989. The timelines – approximately six months' silence between the publication and the violence and threats – and the Islamic themes and discussions of national versus religious loyalties of both cases are the main arguments for them having similar structures (Andersen 2006). Talal Asad (1993) writes about the Rushdie affair that it precipitated discussions on British identity in multicultural

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<sup>166</sup> Tracy McNulty theorises the relation between the feminine and the role of the hostess. To McNulty the feminine is the improper – the *differance* – in the act of hospitality because, firstly, within the Lacanian psychoanalytic discourse, emphasis is placed on the 'thingliness' of the feminine. The feminine is thus 'a foreign presence internal to the host's "eminent personification" of identity' (McNulty 2007: xxviii). Secondly, unconditional hospitality – the act of the host – is to surrender all 'personal property' and in relinquishing all possessions remaining the master only in virtue of the prestige of being host.



Britain. Similar to the debates discussed above in relation to the cartoon controversy, the Rushdie affair called upon liberal values to be re-pronounced as what ‘we have in common’ and of a certain Britishness. Individual rights rather than group rights were emphasised from the side of the British government; issues of freedom of expression and tolerance of diversity was unproblematically heralded. A claim for loyalty to this rather hazy definition of British common identity was forwarded in an open letter, ‘On Being British’, by the deputy to the Home Secretary’s, John Patten (Asad 1993: 245-6). ‘The document is an implicit description of the white cultural majority community, which supposedly sets the norm, and so of what cultural essence is’ (Asad 1993: 243-4). In accordance with my arguments above, this is obviously very similar to the Danish discourse following the cartoon controversy and the Norwegian linguistic-racial case. What sets the two cases apart, I would argue, is not so much the response to the respective publications but rather the instigators of the controversies. As mentioned briefly in the introduction, the ‘universal’ translatability of pictures helped the cartoons cross borders that not even the English language of Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* could cross. More people may have been exposed to the cartoon images than to the words of Rushdie. Another difference between the two cases is that, whereas the Rushdie affair began due to a creative author’s critique of Islam in a novel, the cartoon controversy was launched in a news medium by journalistic editors as a provocation for debate about – initially – self-censorship among Danish artists and journalists and later about global freedom of expression and liberal rights. Thus, as a practice of democratic value, the cartoons inscribed journalistic practice in a liberal democratic narrative of ‘universal’ rights and enforced a sense of intellectual and rational superiority over the perceived emotionally-charged antagonists.

In chapter 2 I argue that journalistic freedom of expression is linked to the concept of objectivity which in turn comes in several modes depending on the ethical or epistemological position of the journalist subject. Freedom of expression serves both to allow the public a voice to speak up against the powers that be (that is, the right to be heard (Silverstone 2007)) and the right to be informed. The journalistic subjects are the keepers of this tool of communication and are left with the power to determine what the ‘public’ wants and needs and how it wants it presented (Berry 2005). In the cartoon controversy, the editors (journalistic subjects themselves) used this tool to inform the public about self-censorship – if only in a clumsy way. However, the



(minority) public was allowed access to a voice only within the format of liberal discourse when it happened to speak against the journalistic argument put forth in the debate. Moreover, as a watchdog of democratic rights, the journalistic practice in the cartoon controversy was temporarily suspended because the practice had an obvious stake in the matter but epistemological objectivity needed to be substantiated. That is, not only did the controversy make apparent the cultural implicitness of liberal politics, as I argued above, it also made apparent the same liberal foundations of journalistic objectivity.

### 3.5 COSMO-JOURNALISM REVISITED

Returning, then, to the concepts of tolerance and hospitality, in the case of the cartoon controversy it is a matter of journalistic practice which gives the case its specific importance and which needs to be theorised in terms of cosmopolitan ethics.

Following the theorisation presented in chapter 2, in which I argued for a journalistic cosmopolitanism as a networked ethical and singular relation rather than a professional working relationship which aims at communicating moral obligations ‘globally’ based in networked communities, I propose a journalism of relation. Above I sketched out the postcolonial critiques and used them to dissect the cartoon controversy’s implicit ‘whiteness’ and secular assumptions. Now I argue that moving beyond – in the Derridean use of the term – postcolonial power-relational binaries transversal subjectivities may open up a space for cosmopolitan ethics infused by journalism of relation. The cosmopolitan journalistic relation is singular and based in the subject position and in subjectivity. However, most of the journalistic and political discourse repeated in this case study analysis about the cartoons depicting the Moslem prophet Mohammed has been of a *unifying* (Muhlmann 2008) character. *Unifying* journalism aims at producing the common reader and expression, thus it tends to gloss over minority voices. In *unifying* journalism the form stays the same though the content may vary according to the voices. In contrast, *decentring* (Muhlmann 2008) journalism positions the journalist outside the community of which s/he writes in order to show some ‘truths’ which are taken-for-granted in the community. However, this *decentring* kind of journalism needs to always stay in flux and in chapter 3 I used Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of *detrterritorialisation* and *becoming-minoritarian* in order to do that. *Becoming-minoritarian* is a qualitative move (Braidotti 2006) which



enables an ethical response in journalistic relation. It is not a stance which constructs relative cultural minorities who then gain the political or cultural upper-hand. It comes closer to Gilroy's concept of *conviviality*, which argues for interrelated respect and curiosity (i.e., an interest in knowing more) towards others. *Becoming-minoritarian* furthermore allows for ever-changing subjectivities. That is, the (journalist-) subject is not-one but continuously impacts and affects (and is affected by) others. Doing Deleuzian journalism would then mean putting an ethical challenge to journalistically sustained social imaginaries by reconfiguring 'global' networks into ethical and singular embedded, embodied and convivial self-other relation, as I argued in chapter 3. I based my ethical concept of relation on de Beauvoir's notion that the subject's freedom is determined by the freedom of the other and that that other is always already part of the self – that is, not-one (Braidotti 2006). This adds to the concept of conviviality the embodiedness inherent in journalism of relation.

The above ethical relation of deterritorialised othering of the self positions the cartoon controversy in a rather different light. Firstly, it breaks up the binary power relation between self and other which is still prevalent in postcolonial theories. This means that though openness towards the other is wanted it is not a matter of essentialising group identities. Secondly, the ethical response – which is magnified in the heightened responsibility of response in the journalistic practice – is singular though always not-one. Thirdly, the deterritorialising ethical self-other relation is embedded and embodied in the journalist-subject.

I believe that if these three approaches to journalistic practice were introduced to the discussion of the cartoons, the debates would have looked different – at least journalistically. The three points above force an opening of the format to allow for different content expressions.

### 3.6 FINAL CARTOON SPEECH BUBBLE

In this case study I have focused on the invisibility of the ideas of secularity, 'whiteness' and tolerance which lay behind the mediated debates following the publication of the cartoons of the Moslem prophet Mohammed in a Danish newspaper in 2005. Through discussion of published opinions from scholars and journalists put forward in books and articles, and coupled with theories of postcolonial and



postsecular conditions, it may seem as if the cartoon controversy made the Danish public feel that ‘globalisation’ had come to Denmark (Kastrup 2008). More importantly, though, the case opened up the potentiality of self-reflexivity and self-critique available to the ‘western’ journalist-subject with regard to his or her practice. That is, my analysis focused on the journalistic roots of the cartoon controversy which made a particular critique and potential for change possible – though this possibility has not been achieved.

I have sought to deconstruct culturally the arguments for the untouchable nature of liberal democratic values such as freedom of expression, tolerance and equality within the realm of journalistic practice and I have argued along Derridean and Deleuzian lines that it is not ‘enough to give content to a form in order to advance the freedom of the press, that is, the freedom of a right that will never go without duty or without the recognition of a freedom “before the press”...’ (Derrida 1992: 98). Following the argument I made in chapter 2 in this case study, I proposed that the notion of objectivity and freedom of expression are interlinked to an extent which necessitates a critique of freedom of expression if objectivity is deconstructed, as I believe it should be. Acknowledging the duty and power of the editing role of the journalist-subject demands a questioning of the claim of journalistic objectivity and of the embeddedness of the journalist-subject. Thus, I made apparent the particular Danish political setting in terms of relationships to religion and to equality and I drew lines to more general discussions about liberal democratic ideas of tolerance and hospitality. I have aimed at showing how issues of ‘race’ intersect with gendered and religious identities in discourses of tolerance and equality. And I have argued that the journalist-subject in particular needs to shed the secular illiteracy – that is, to become aware – of these underlying structures if journalistic practice is to enable a political and ethical change.

Finally, I returned to the ethics of cosmopolitan conviviality in journalism of relation. I pointed to three modes of relations which enable a breaking up of the journalistic format which keeps some voices silent. I rejected the binary position of ‘them’ and ‘us’ and called for a singular subject relation which is always already not-one while acknowledging the deterritorialising effect of journalism’s ‘global’ scope. This case



study has thus been an attempt to critique the concept of freedom of expression by focusing on the means through which it is often practised, journalism.



## CONCLUSION:

Recently a family member invited me to join Geni – a network that provides a possibility to create an online genealogical production of my family tree. Each family member invites new family members and adds new information about ancestors and other relatives. In this way the tree grows, rhizomatically and virally spreading, online. Geni's slogan is 'everyone is related'<sup>167</sup> and it presents itself as 'a tool for understanding and staying in touch with family members'. In my introduction to this dissertation I described how the myths of Nordic ancestry combined with personal recorded family trees made for a strong Nordic identification and sense of geographical and mythological belonging. The cover of this dissertation is a reproduction of the first page of my family tree on paper. My family tree in Geni cannot be reproduced here – it does not have a first page or a starting point and it does not have a comprehensible and linear structure. Geni is a relational and rhizomatic family tree and a production of familiar relations as well as of technological advancements. Because it is such a continuous formation and (re)formation of information it (re)produces and constructs memories and relations online rather than focusing on already set myths and models of identification. The method employed by Geni neither fixes historical accounts nor reproduces cultural legends, but stays in the in-between and in flux. Geni, in contrast to my document of family relationships on the cover, also breaks up the geographical fixation. Through online technology, Geni allows for boundary crossings and it potentially connects me to relatives on all continents and cultures. Though my on-paper relations also sporadically introduce relatives from St Croix and Guyana and the US, these references remain peripheral, fixed and immobile. Geni potentially allows for these relations to develop online.

Behind the idea of Geni are former executives and early employees of online enterprises such as eBay, eGroups, PayPal and Tribe, according to the online presentation. 'Global' online networks of social interaction and management are exploding online in this second round of internet-based economic ventures. Like the Obama campaign online, Facebook, LinkedIn and other online outlets and networks, Geni is a product of the new rhizomatic and deterritorialised connectivities and relations. Whereas Obama's campaign and his supporters are structured in terms of

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<sup>167</sup> <http://www.geni.com/login>



political activity and interest, Facebook and LinkedIn are networks of friends and professionals, and Geni is a network of genealogical connections. All of the online networks dispute the notion of an objective author and compiler of relations; each participant in these networks is therefore called upon to be accountable for his or her participation and production online; moreover, Geni's slogan that 'everyone is related' is proven true in the sense that relatedness is understood broadly in terms of relation. As such Geni can be taken as an appropriate analogy of the key ideas and methods I have developed in this dissertation.

### *The experimental lab of journalism*

Similarly, this dissertation's three theoretically-framed chapters and three case studies have asserted three major points:

1. A critique of the culturally and journalistically sustained belief in universality and the capability of journalistic practice to achieve a universal stand-point through an operationalisation of the concept of 'objectivity'. This cultural bias is founded in an unacknowledged notion of Danish whiteness and in a reluctance to assume accountability for the past and for the power relations which are constructed around and through the political, religious and cultural concept of whiteness, particularly in the European context. Because whiteness is not only about colours and shades of hue, the political and personal ramifications of this invisible power structure underlying the Danish society seep into political, religious, cultural, social and gendered mediated situations. Claims of modern rationality in contrast to emotional religiousness, positions of transcending physicality as opposed to the embodiment of the other, and of scientifically othering the feminine, the black and the non-human are all positions taken by means of a normative idea of European whiteness.

2. The first point leads me to argue for assuming journalistic accountability. Journalistic accountability, I have argued, is not about placing guilt but about understanding the implications of the impossibility of an 'objective' stand-point. That is, in order to assume accountability for the journalistic cultural memories being continually re-produced, journalist-subjects have to engage their positionality in relation to the craftsmanship of journalism, in relation to the story, the cultural and political dimensions and the sources used in the story etc. Journalist-subjects need to



acknowledge to themselves and to their readers that they are always already implicated – embodied and embedded – in the story they are telling.

3. Journalistic-subjects are therefore not-one and always in relation. By this statement I mean that by virtue of their embodied and embedded subjectivity and through technological advances journalist-subjects are always multiply in relation to others. These others are experienced through sensuous and sensorial affectivities. This is clearly a view on journalistic practice and subjectivity from the angle of the humanities, which infuses the analyses of journalistic practice with a phenomenological approach informed by scholarship on gender and ‘race’. I have several times evoked the possibility of an approach which returns the accountability mentioned above to the journalist-subject and from there on activates the public into renewing their democratic citizenship or netizenship. I will in the following present my proposal for a concrete change in journalistic practice to a journalism of relation and affirmative creativity by way of experimentation and in terms of epistemological, ethical and political implications.

#### *Epistemological accountability*

Journalistic training differs among countries and schools. Whereas in the US and the UK journalistic training has long been connected to academic studies, in Denmark it was only in the late 1990s that the monopoly of one school of journalism was broken. The school had been set up in the 1970s, when internship-led education to be a journalist was exchanged for centralised schooling. The school of journalism was in 1998 challenged by two university-based alternatives: one at Roskilde University Centre, which added two years of journalistic training to a degree in social sciences or humanities, and one at the University of Southern Denmark, which developed a bachelor’s degree and later a master’s degree in journalistic training. The latter is the one I referred to in chapter 2 when I described the pledge of journalistic responsibility which the students of journalism there developed. Though the history of Danish training of journalists may have an impact on the way journalistic practices unfold, Danish journalism is very inspired by the American school of investigative reporting, the waves of New Journalism and Public Journalism and the general news criteria of identification and personal and political relevance. The challenge levelled at the traditional school of journalism, and the potential for change in journalistic practice,



turned out to be of little value since the market of employment for Danish journalists still held the power over the journalistic training. The media corporations still decide which journalist students are granted internships and thereby allowed to fulfil the criteria in order to graduate. The change needs to come not only from the structure or the content of journalistic education but also from the market and from established journalists.

Throughout this dissertation I have pinpointed areas of journalistic coverage which displayed lack of engagement with otherness, cultural knowledge and awareness of others. Case study 1 revealed how cultural memories are constantly reproduced and sustained through journalistic production and practice. The effort of a Danish journalistic TV documentary to raise awareness about Danish complicity in the slave trade and slavery was accompanied by a reiteration of colour-coded human qualities of difference such as musical skills and a silencing of the USVI voices allowing only one Crucian woman to speak for an extended period of time. The journalistic representation of Danish Viking heritage as genetically stable and consistently white was pronounced in the British TV documentary and the US news article analysed in case study 2, and case study 3 discusses the Danish social imaginary's implication with the European identification as an enlightened and irreligious civilisation. All three case studies then showed elements of journalistic reproduction of cultural memories which sustain an implicitly white identity. Whiteness was shown to encompass aspects of political and ideological 'rightness' and in a European context emphasis on religious and cultural identifications merges with gendered, ethnic and 'racial' markers in a way that make whiteness into a flexible and powerful structure of inclusions and exclusions.

One of my conclusions is that in order to achieve epistemological accountability journalistic students need to become aware of this underlying structure of white privilege. Courses in postcolonial theory, gender theories and 'race' theories are therefore crucial to journalistic training. The first step in my suggestion for a journalism of creative affirmation and relation is to challenge the students on their cultural knowledge and acknowledgement of power structures outside the walls of the political institutions like parliaments. Structural forms of replication of sameness and systematic ignorance of others have to be critically addressed and replaced by training



for a journalism of relation. Students of journalism may also gain from courses that contest the idea of a universal stand-point and which engage the student of journalism in his or her stake in the story. The concept of journalistic objectivity has to be questioned in terms of epistemological, ethical and political currency. Moreover, courses on literature and creative writing will allow the students insight into expressions of experience.

### *Ethical accountability*

By expanding the awareness of otherness and complicity within the journalist training I focus on accountability in the journalistic training. This move, however, needs to be supported and sustained by an ethical call to journalist subjectivity. My formulation of journalist subjectivity in chapter 2 is defined in terms of including recognition of responsibility and openness towards the other as a subject. The other changes and exchanges the self continuously and so the journalist-subject is not-one but always in relation to the other in a web-like formation of solidarity. Subjectivity denotes power relations and agency, that is, the power of the media as well as the power of the singular journalist-subject invoked through choosing the angle on the story, choosing the sources and the publishing etc. But subjectivity also means that the journalist-subject is affected by and affects the topic and the sources. Returning, then, to the critique of the journalistic epistemological objectivity, ethically the sham idea of the white objective position allows certain voices air time and silences others without journalistic reflection and accountability. Journalistic subjectivity is about the process of always already being implicated in power relations as journalistic mediators and as personal and political, embodied and embedded subjects.

The first case study showed how journalistically the Danish journalist analysed struggled to account for the USVI 'side to the story' but came up short because of the re-enforced national identification with the Danish viewers. Thus, the journalist reproduced a *unified* 'us' through journalistically positioning himself as an objective object within the story. The constant return to a notion of a unified 'us' to whom the journalist communicates produced in case study 2 a reproduction and commodification of whiteness through capitalistic branding and genetic manipulation. Finally, in case study 3 the unity encompassed a European civilisation and unquestioned democratic communities and Christian concepts of tolerance and



equality. The ethical relation to which the journalist-subjects seem to belong was evoked as white, Christian and rationally democratic. Of course neither the terms of democratisation nor the colonial legacy of the rational approach to knowledge were up for discussion.

Suggesting that journalist-subjects see their trade as journalism of relation means that a de-rooting or deterritorialisation of journalistic identification needs to be enacted. To deterritorialise journalistic production and practice means to give up the unifying practice of journalism and to decentre oneself from the cultural memories and social imaginaries in which the journalist is immersed. But the decentring of subjectivity needs to be continuously enforced in order to avoid a reterritorialisation – that is, a return to a fixed (though changed) image or imaginary. Case study 1 allowed a view into the reterritorialisation of binary positions of identity in the representation of the USVI senator Adelbert Bryan's disruption of the re-enactment of emancipation in 1998. Deterritorialisation denotes staying in flux or *becoming*. In chapter 3 I connected the re-thinking of globalisation in terms of deterritorialisation to another Deleuzian and Guattarian concept of *becoming-minoritarian*. The traditional journalistic practice is embedded not only in the white culture and social imaginary of the Danish nation but also in the modernity project as an agent of freedom of expression and of democracy. *Becoming-minoritarian* as an ethical action calls upon the journalist-subject to acknowledge the embeddedness of his or her position as a journalist and the embodiedness of his or her experience as a subject. Acknowledging these aspects of journalistic practice allows for a fluid decentring of the journalistic position – a *becoming-minoritarian* – which dismantles the journalistic master-position of whiteness. With the concept of deterritorialisation in combination with *becoming-minoritarian* journalism achieves a re-negotiation of the master-position in the practice and production.

Deterritorialisation and *becoming-minoritarian* forges a relational solidarity or cosmopolitanism from below, which I addressed particularly in chapter 3. This kind of cosmopolitanism is not based on the rationality of the public sphere or sustaining an idea of global governance. Rather cosmopolitanism from below is a *becoming-minoritarian* which assumes the position of the other in order not to understand the other (which would reduce the other to the same) but to acknowledge the other in



terms of difference. Journalism as relation is a call for cosmopolitan and relational journalism which does not reduce the other to the same but reinforces the equality of difference.

#### *Political accountability*

*Becoming-minoritarian* is a political activism away from the hegemonic position of journalism of identification. Firstly, deconstructing 'objectivity' raises the ultimately political question of who is heard and who gets to speak. Secondly, redefining the self-other relation in terms of solidarity of differences and of emphasis on accessing the excess of relations is a political action. This is because, when the self-other relation is defined through solidarity and synergy or excess between the self and the multiple others, the concept of democratic cosmopolitanism need to be thought of in terms of singular relations of difference rather than of overarching universal moral humanity. Cosmopolitanism has to give up its idea of global humanity based on sameness. Thirdly, the geo-political quest to deterritorialise and rhizomise multiple relations challenges the territorialised identity politics of whiteness in the Nordic realm. Moreover, cultural memories are connected to the geographical belongingness and therefore the two reinforce each others' hegemonic position and representation within the social imaginary. Deterritorialising relations in a new cosmopolitan solidarity from below explodes this territorial connection and its white cultural fixation. Finally, this new focus of the political aspects of journalistic practice as a subjectivity-generated action and with a new cosmopolitan potential throws into relief the role of the receivers of news and their interaction and dialogue with the journalistic production. Responsibility and a call for accountability for the democratic value of the journalistic production are then shared with the citizens or netizens.

#### *Practical cosmo-journalism*

When the educational reforms I have proposed are initiated, and courses in postcolonial history and memory, gendered and ethnic or 'racial' positions, and the questionability of the concepts of objectivity and freedom of expression have been offered, creativity and imagination need to be introduced into the idea of journalistic practice and production.



Approaching how this journalistic production may practically be activated I want to address two modes of intervention, which I also presented in chapters 2 and 3 in particular, as well as in case study 3. Firstly, I suggest that journalistic news items and documentaries should experiment with breaking up the journalistic format in order to break up content and allow discussions and other voices to emerge. Journalistic formats too often represent the ‘master’s voice’ in that certain narratives reproduce power relations and induce journalists to reach for familiar sources and narrative characteristics. As a child of the modernity project, journalism is a rational endeavour with logical headings and serious solutions. However, the relational aspect of the deterritorialised world allows the affective and sensorial conditions of communication to play a part. Allowing new ways of speaking, a hetero-glossia in journalism brings forth new words and new experiences in the same way as academic methodologies lead to a variety of conclusions. This would be freedom of expression proper.

The second intervention I propose involves the embodiedness and embeddedness of the journalist-subject, who may gain awareness by being confronted with his or her gendered, ‘racial’, religious embodiedness and cultural, political and nationalistic embeddedness. I suggest an experiment of exchanging journalists in diverse cultural and political contexts for a longer period of time than journalistic practice often allows for, in order to record the questions of identity and subjectivity that pop up in the process of dealing with the experience of an outlandish environment. This experiment should not, however, end in a reterritorialisation, in the sense that the journalist-subjects participating in the experiment need to reach a conclusion or a stand-point from which the truth can be beheld. Rather the experiment should be a process of experience and sensory relational – of *becoming-journalist*.



## APPENDIX 1:

*Semi-structured interview outline for interviews with journalists in USVI, 1–23  
February 2008*

Two major newspapers in the USVI cover the daily news on the islands; *The Virgin Islands Daily News* (*The Daily News*) and *The St Croix Avis* (*The Avis*). A third 'paper' is the internet-based *The Source*. *The Daily News* is based in St Thomas, but covers all three islands. It prides itself on its Pulitzer Prize-winning articles and its history of investigative journalism. *The Daily News* focuses on news stories that reveal corruption and debates political issues as well as it covers cultural events and topics in special issues and weekend supplements. Crucians seem to think that this St Thomas-based newspaper only covers the negative aspects of St Croix – issues of violence and crime. *The St Croix Avis* or simply *The Avis* is a traditional newspaper still carrying its Danish given name, 'avis', meaning 'newspaper'. The main focus of *The Avis* is the island of St Croix, where it is considered the local paper. *The Avis* covers many cultural stories and issues of education and health, though investigative journalism also finds its way to the printed pages. The differences are furthermore expressed in the ownership of the papers; *The Avis* is privately owned whereas *The Daily News* is owned by a corporation. Recently the *Daily News* changed hands after a bankruptcy.

I interviewed journalists Ayesha Morris, Aesha Duval and Tim Fields at *The Daily News*, Shari Wiltshire, Tom Eader and Stephanie Hanlon at *The Avis*, and Bill Kossler at *The Source*. The aim of conducting the interviews was to illuminate the USVI side to the journalistic representation of the relation between Denmark and the USVI. This was done through targeted but open questions relating to the interviewee's own experience in the field and practice. I managed the interviews as a conversation between myself and the interviewees.

The following sketches out the semi-structured questions guiding the interviews.

### *Questions to journalists*

Personal background:



- Gender, age, nationality, religion (if any), educational background and how long they have been working at their respective newspapers.

Reflections on practice concerning relations between Denmark (DK) and VI:

General:

- How prominently does historical knowledge figure in the approach to stories featuring Danes or Danish descendants?
- What are the signifiers attached to the Danes (in general) in VI journalism?
- What are the words and historical events that are always mentioned when covering stories dealing with the relation between DK and VI, if any?
- What is the role played by political conviction (religion (if any), ethnicity, gender) of the journalist?

Own specific production:

- Which journalistic genre does the interviewee practice most often?
- How often/how many pieces do you write a week/month relating to historical issues of the former colonial status of the islands?
- Describe a story you wrote dealing with the issue of the relations between DK and VI or featuring Danish actors
  - How did the historical past figure in the story and why?
  - Why was is/wasn't it necessary to mention the colonial past in this piece?
- How does the question of identity play out?
  - Modern journalism seems to emphasise the commonalities in a society; the geographical, ethnic, religious, political and ideological proximity of 'us'. Danish scholars have written books implying that the Danish Virgin Islands could not generate empathy and interest in the European based Denmark because of the lack of the cultural, historical, political, ethnic coherency in the colonies. How does that relate to the experience of the VI journalists?



- To what extent can the colonial past, slavery and experience of oppression be said to take the role of ‘commonality’ and ‘coherency’ in the VI social imaginary – and reflected in VI journalism?
- How does it look from outside VI – coming from New York etc.?
- Who are you writing for?
- How do you see your own relation to your community?



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## SAMENVATTING

*Journalistiek van relatie.*

*De sociale constructies van 'witheid' en de implicaties in de hedendaagse praktijk en productie van de Deense journalistiek*

In deze dissertatie onderzoek ik de ik/Ander-relatie in de hedendaagse cultureel-politieke ruimte van Denemarken, zoals die in en door de Deense journalistiek naar voren komt. Als onderdeel van de 'westerse wereld' reflecteert en versterkt het Deense journalistieke werk en onderzoek het cultureel geheugen – en daarmee het hegemonisch zelfbeeld, de maatschappelijke denkbeelden van Denemarken en tot op zekere hoogte ook dat van zijn 'westerse' burelen.

Vanuit mijn standpunt in een Europese traditie van wat men 'filosofie van de ervaring' kan noemen (waarbij de nadruk gelegd wordt op de belichaming van kennis en de subjectiviteit van de ervaring) richt ik mij met name op de praktijk en *productie* (in de betekenis die Raymond Williams aan dat woord geeft) van de journalistieke participatie in de re- en deconstructie van het cultureel geheugen en gevoelens van nationale, culturele, etnische en religieuze verwantschap.

In de eerste drie hoofdstukken beschrijf ik mijn theoretisch kader. In hoofdstuk 1 presenteer ik een aantal stemmen die de vermeende objectiviteit en universaliteit van de witte 'westerse' cultuur en politiek ter discussie stellen. De kritiek komt zowel van Afrikaans-Amerikaanse wetenschappers als van 'witte' feministen – de twee groepen verschillen echter van mening over hun uitgangspunt en theoretische aannames. Daarnaast hebben Afrikaans-Amerikaanse vrouwen de aandacht gevestigd op het feit dat ze zich in een bijzondere situatie bevinden doordat ze tot beide groepen behoren.

Ik hanteer een post-fenomenologische aanpak van dit probleem, en beschrijf een theoretisch kader gebaseerd op de stelling dat, hoewel perceptie aan de basis staat van een fenomenologische benadering van *difference*, perceptie niet gelijkgesteld mag worden aan visualisatie. Perceptie is veeleer een vorm van begrijpen die een sterke binding creëert met persoonlijk bewustzijn en ervaring. Door alle persoonlijke ervaring en zelfbewustzijn van de difference-fenomenologie erbij te betrekken,



ontstaat een theorie van de ik/Ander-relatie die tegelijk persoonlijk en politiek is. Vervolgens pleit ik voor de ik/Ander-relatie als een ethisch appel aan de collectieve relatie en voor creatieve en politieke bevestiging van persoonlijke relaties.

In hoofdstuk 2 leg ik een verband tussen de fenomenologische 'ras'- en genderdiscussies en de maatschappelijke en productieve context van de hedendaagse 'westerse' en Europese cultuur en politiek, zoals die via de media geglobaliseerd worden. Ik herdefinieer journalistiek als de theorie en praktijk van de productie van het cultureel geheugen en maatschappelijke denkbeelden van *gendered*, etnische, religieuze, nationale en 'ras'-differences.

Aan de basis van de argumentatie in hoofdstuk 2 ligt kritiek op het journalistiek gebruik van 'objectiviteit'. Dit gebruik verbergt de journalistieke subjectiviteit; de ethische aansprakelijkheid en relatie worden losgeknipt uit de journalistieke opleiding en praktijk. Daardoor wordt een 'wit' en homogeen maatschappelijk denkbeeld geproduceerd. Ik roep op tot denken over journalistiek als *relatie*, zowel in de zin van technologische overdracht als in de zin van (een netwerk van) subjectiviteiten. Om dit mogelijk te maken is een wijziging van ons idee over 'ons' noodzakelijk, een wijziging die identiteit herdefinieert in termen van intensiteiten (Braidotti 2006), een ethiek van 'differences' (de Beauvoir 1976; Braidotti 2006) en een niet-reductionistische opvatting van de Ander als deel van onszelf (Glissant 1997).

In hoofdstuk 3 bouw ik voort op hoofdstuk 1 en 2 en bewerk ideeën omtrent kosmopolitisme, van een universele reproductie van gelijkheid tot creatieve producties van unieke ik/Ander-relaties gebaseerd op praktische en productieve journalistiek. Mijn stelling is dat journalistiek kosmopolitisme een *gedeterritorialiseerde* praktijk is en geen gezonde, alomvattende en alom geaccepteerde moraliteit, noch een eenvoudige tweedeling van hegemonie-versus-verzet.

Ik pleit voor een radicaal andere journalistieke praktijk, die zich verbindt aan de toepassing van Deleuziaanse deterritorialisatie in plaats van aan globalisering, en aan het Deleuziaanse *becoming* in plaats van vast te houden aan een vermeende gelijkheid. Deze concepten ontmaskeren het idee van journalistieke objectiviteit en de



autoritaire positie van 'waarheidspreker' voor een ongedefinieerd maar verenigd. Het is de ontmaskering van het moderne, rationele journalistieke subject dat terugverwijst naar de homogene bewoners van de natiestaat; het is de ontrafeling van de journalistiek – journalistiek als becoming en als surplus van de relatie.

De case studies beschrijven vervolgens bepaalde aspecten van de voornoemde ik/Ander-relatie zoals die in de Deense journalistiek tot uiting komt. Via deze case studies pleit ik voor een creatief-productieve omslag in de journalistiek, gevestigd in nieuwe belichaamde en *embedded* subjectiviteiten. Elk laat een ander aspect zien van de productie van een cultureel geheugen in de journalistiek.

Vanuit interdisciplinair perspectief en met gebruik van een aantal methodologiën uit cultuurstudies (waaronder semiotische analyse, discoursanalyse en interdisciplinaire contextanalyse) benader ik het cultureel geheugen in de Deense journalistieke en politieke context. Elke case bevat een uniek analytisch kader, afgeleid van de in de eerste drie hoofdstukken beschreven theorie. Ze behandelen achtereenvolgens [1] de Deens-koloniale geschiedenis op de Maagdeneilanden de culturele herinnering aan die periode – zowel vanuit Deens als Amerikaans (Maagdeneilands) perspectief, [2] de Deense 'witte' genealogie en de Viking-iconografie in journalistieke representaties en [3] het politieke (seculair/religieuze) discours tijdens en na de zogenaamde 'Deense cartoonaffaire'.

De eerste case beschrijft de verknoping van journalistiek productie met het cultureel geheugen en de kracht waarmee ze samen het gedeelde 'wij' weten te definiëren in termen van 'ons gezamenlijk geheugen'. Twee soorten historisch verslag komen aan de orde; het geschiedkundige archiefdocument en de culturele herinnering. Beide vormen fixeren de culturele productie en identificatie; ik stel echter dat de journalistiek juist de geschiedenis zou moeten herdefiniëren, weg van een lineair 'voortschrijdend inzicht' in gebeurtenissen uit het verleden, naar een rizomatisch, niet-eenduidig en ethisch begrip van de herinnering, zoals dat belichaamd en *embedded* is in het journalistiek subject. Ik toon aan dat het denken over de journalistieke praktijk in termen van deterritorialisatie en becoming dit proces bespoedigt.



In de tweede case verschuift de focus van 'hen' (het idee van de Ander) naar 'ons' -- de zelfidentificatie van het Deense volk door en met de Deense geschiedenis. Ik beargumenteer hoe het icoon van de 'witte' mannelijke Viking en de eraan verbonden symbolische betekenissen het Scandinavisch erfgoed als merk met een aantal typische eigenschappen positioneren, terwijl de internationale verspreiding van dat merk deze representatie als mondiale Gelijkheid vercommercialiseert. Wat de iconografie en het discours rond deze Viking-representatie betreft, zou het journalistiek subject zichzelf moeten distantiëren van het op identiteit gebaseerde idee van 'witheid' en zijn productie en praktijk moeten structureren rond solidariteit en (wederzijdse) bevestiging. Het pleidooi voor een voortdurende deterritorialisatie die de geopolitieke schemata van 'westerse' hegemonie doorbreekt is van belang in verband met deze Viking-mythe van homogeniteit, omdat mythe, geschiedenis en geheugen zowel fysiek als mentaal met de regio verbonden zijn, terwijl ze 'geëxporteerd' worden als een merk van een 'witte' Deense mannelijkheid.

De laatste case study richt de focus op recente ontwikkelingen in nationalistisch discours – waarin liberaal-democratische argumenten naar voren komen. Door de ik/Ander-relatie te baseren op culturele en nationale herinneringen, stelt dit discours dat universele waarden van het (liberaal) secularisme in het geding zijn. De in cultuur en nationaliteit geïmpregneerde zij-versus-wij-tweedeling wordt een 'oorlog tussen beschavingen'.

Deze case beschrijft journalistieke basisprincipes en de uitdrukking ervan in de polemiek die volgde op de publicatie van twaalf cartoons waarin de profeet Mohammed werd afgebeeld. In plaats van de producten en productie van journalistieke subjecten te analyseren, kijk ik in deze zogenaamde 'Deense cartoonaffaire' naar de onderliggende aannames omtrent identiteit, burgerschap en 'Deensheid'. Uit deze aannames komen zowel structuren als 'ras', seculariteit, religie, gender en seksualiteit naar voren, als een maar zelden onderzochte parallel tussen de naturalisatie van seculariteit en die van 'witheid'.

De drie theoretische hoofdstukken en de drie case studies laten zien hoe journalistieke culturele herinneringen bijdragen aan de re- en deconstructie van maatschappelijke denkbeelden. Ook blijkt eruit dat deze constructies epistemologische, ethische en



politieke consequenties hebben. Daarom pleit ik voor een andere journalistieke praktijk en productie, die de journalistieke (belichaamde en embedded) subjectiviteit benadrukken.

In mijn conclusie schets ik drie niveaus van verandering die de journalistieke praktijk zouden kunnen openbreken. Ten eerste moet journalistiek als opleiding gevoed worden door postkoloniale, 'ras'- en genderstudies -- en door een serieuze discussie over het idee van objectiviteit. Ten tweede stel ik voor dat journalistieke subjecten hun vak gaan zien als 'journalistiek van de relatie', waarmee ik bedoel dat een ontworteling of deterritorialisatie van de journalistieke identificatie moet plaatsvinden. Dit is een ethisch appel aan het journalistiek subject, niet aan het institutionele niveau, noch aan het vak. Ten derde, en volgend uit mijn theoretische uiteenzetting, pleit ik voor politieke aansprakelijkheid die de ik/Ander-relatie herdefinieert in termen van de solidariteit van verschil, met extra nadruk op toegang tot het surplus van relatie. Dit is een politieke daad.