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World War I and the German Cultural Elite's Androgynous Masculinity

The picture of German soldiers greeting World War I with shouts of joy is well known. In analyzing this picture, Swedish historian Jens Ljunggren aims to challenge established results on gender relations at the turn of the last century. Earlier research has pointed at increased gender segregation during the nineteenth century, which resulted in a masculinity crisis at the turn of the century. World War I was thus regarded as an opportunity to display "real manhood." Even though much of the previous research in this area agrees that Wilhelmine society was male-dominated, explanations for this state of affairs differ. While Klaus Theweleit, for instance, has stated that the attempts of men to differentiate themselves from women also resulted in a struggle against men's feminine sides, George L. Mosse has regarded aggression against women as one aspect of a long tradition among the German bourgeoisie to draw boundaries against others in order to create normality. Most of this research was also colored by reliance on the German *Sonderweg* debate. Thomas KÃÂ¼hne is one of few researchers who have pointed at a weaker masculine ideal during the war. Ljunggren follows KÃÂ¼hne's tracks and studies the androgynous discourse of masculinity among the educated, male German elite. The high percentage of members of the educated elite among German World War I volunteers is, according to Ljunggren, the result of a fight for status, resulting in an androgynous masculinity. This idea makes Ljunggren's analyses not only an important contribution to research on German masculinity and World War I, but also to theories concerning gender relations.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the behavior of the German educated elite before, during, and after World War I from a perspective of masculinity. What happened with the educated elite's perception of masculinity? To what extent and how was it reproduced, or had the prewar discourse on masculinity changed? Ljunggren is also interested in the relationship between the construction of masculinity and the conception of war. How and through which processes were notions of masculinity and gender order constructed within the educated elite? How did members of this group define themselves as men and what did this definition have to do with their perception of war?

The analysis has its starting point in Michael Kimmel's theoretical assumptions about masculinity as mainly created among men and accompanied by permanent derogations of women and other deviants. The German educated elite did gather in closed student associations, characterized by ritual and symbolic activities. In addition, these principles were, according to Ljunggren's theoretical assumptions, reproduced at the central and exclusively male political and legal level.

In six chapters, the development of masculinity among the educated between the nineteenth century and the interwar period is analyzed. During the nineteenth century, German society could be characterized as homosocial. Due to a weak women's movement, gender

relations were not as polarized as in countries like Great Britain and France, where women could participate in the public sphere by joining associations and salons. This structure created a unique opportunity for the German educated elite to broaden its discourse on masculinity in an androgynous direction. German culture was defined in such a way that humans were referred to as whole beings. Rather than being considered leftovers appropriate for women, feelings were regarded as part of the masculine ideal of the educated elite. This condition also had consequences for the formation of the public and the private. However, rather than separate spheres, public and private were regarded as different stages on a scale where family life was the first step in a man's life, to be crowned with public life as the highest stage of development of the masculine personality. Between 1870 and 1914, Germany developed into a more explicitly masculine society. At the same time, a struggle for status between different bourgeois groups started. The educated elite had to show a distance to the aristocracy and fought for masculine values on the homosocial field. In this process, discourses on gender and class did overlap. How did then the educated elite behave in this struggle for status?

According to Ljunggren, one of the results of this masculinization was that the struggle between men became much stronger than that between the sexes. Masculine identity, characterized by boundary crossings and boundary creations, became problematic. Boundary crossings had earlier turned educated men into spiritual aristocrats, which put them above men of the ordinary bourgeoisie. Industrialization, militarism, the unification of the German nation, and the growing numbers of the economic bourgeoisie questioned such boundary crossings and the struggle between men was hightened. Thus, the educated elite had to relate to both militaristic ideals and the new bourgeoisie. This discursive twist threatened the status of the androgynous masculine ideal when it was confronted with a military and a rationalist masculinity. The solution is, according to Ljunggren, visible in Nietzsche's use of the concepts of dionysic and apollonic. Nietzsche combined these notions in order to create a new androgynous type of masculinity of a higher order. In addition, Georg Simmel pointed at the conception of boundary crossings of Hegel and the Romantics as still acceptable. During this period no biological obstacle was perceived; the scale between male and female was still fluent and not polarized. The discourse on masculinity still consisted of a combination of both feminine and masculine attributes. This dialectic model was the result of claims for status among the educated elite in contest with other bourgeois ideals of masculinity.

Close contact with femininity was not only an advantage, however; it created also a range of problems concerning *real* women. How was it possible to be feminine enough and at the same time create distance towards women? Ljunggren's suggestion is that the boundary-crossing masculinity created a need for a physical and legal exclusion of women from organizations. Moreover, as the ideology of a separate sphere was not very strong in Germany, it was of no use for the definition of masculinity. Instead, masculinity was defined much more broadly and male supremacy was expressed at all human levels by masculine ideas of strength, intellectualism, self-control, emotionality, and spirituality. The potential to become a whole person was then the criterion for being masculine or un-masculine. Egoism and materialism were regarded as un-masculine while friendship, love, religiosity, and inner creativity were characteristics for *true* masculinity. Nevertheless, not only was this ideal questioned by the industrialized and militarized society, physical boundaries between men and women were getting weaker as well. For instance, women, who were seen as cold and consumerist, were regarded as a threat to these ideals. Against Kimmel's and Theweleit's statements that homoeroticism was a reaction against self-discipline and the suppression of emotions at the turn of the century, Ljunggren's position is that this is a compensatory strategy in the difficult twist of creating and crossing boundaries at the same time. Education, genius, and androgyny were thus important factors in the creation of the German homosocial society. When the German women's movement grew stronger around the turn of the century, the discourse on boundary-crossing masculinity had already been established.

The start of World War I created new opportunities for the educated elite to prove its ideal of androgynous masculinity. Here Ljunggren's results give nuances to earlier scholarship. Different pictures of the enemy were created, fitting their masculine ideal. Great Britain's national character was described as dry and opposed to the German emotional culture. War then created not only a possibility to defend emotions, but was also a way of showing that gender boundaries could be crossed. At the same time, an ideal of strong and hard masculinity could be adopted into this picture. Thus, hard military masculinity was combined with the emotional part of the educated elite's ideal of masculinity. Many volunteers in World War I were members of the educated elite. Now they had an opportunity either to stress the intense experience of war, or make feeling hard into a way of main-

taining their discourse on masculinity.

In the sixth chapter, Ljunggren compares German masculinity with developments in France and Great Britain. Masculinity in these nation-states was not defined in androgynous terms, according to Ljunggren. He makes the physical participation of women in the public sphere responsible for this difference; the separate sphere model was much more developed in the two other countries, which created a need for an enemy to show that androgyny was a good attribute in the national character. Nationalism among British and French soldiers was much more heavily based on liberation from family and professional roles than on gender relations in general. This comparison is based on secondary sources and is one of the more disputable parts of the analysis. Ljunggren points several times to the difficulty with this comparison and does not want to draw conclusions that are overly significant from it. The question, then, is what this kind of comparison can show, when relying on secondary sources that do not perfectly fit the questions posed by the author of the comparison. In my opinion, this comparison has an important merit, which should not be underestimated; it raises new questions and hence becomes a means for discussing the subject further. For the question of the uniqueness of the discourse on masculinity of the German educated elites, however, it does not give a sufficient answer and does need a more thoroughgoing methodological discussion.

In the last two chapters, Ljunggren discusses the development of masculinity during the Weimar Republic. The new democracy was opposed to androgynous masculinity on two fronts, in conflict both with boundary crossing masculinity and the culture of military force. The new political order no longer excluded women legally or organizationally, but Ljunggren states that the separate sphere model made its definite breakthrough in Germany at this time. Now men would be ruled by reason, intellect, and self-control. Within psychoanalysis, demands for the liberation of German men from their mothers were pronounced. At the same time, the author argues against an interpretation of an abrupt break with pre-war masculinity. Instead, military and civil connotations were moved into the civilian sectors of society. Honor and the capacity to act, courage, national strength, and power should be used to build the new republic in order to recover from the military defeat. The homosocial society was transformed into a separate sphere society. The spatial separation between the sexes weakened, which had severe consequences for the earlier social categories of male identification. The consequences were, according to Ljunggren, first, that the inter-masculine struggle changed. It was no longer defined in terms of either the bourgeoisie or the military, because neither had a self-evident status anymore. Instead the struggle became existential. Second, a development towards masculinity was taking place. Masculinity was defined for all German men and sometimes even for men in general. Third, men lost their organizational advantage; there was no longer the same sharp social separation between men and women. The separate-sphere society was weakened at a physical level and strengthened at an ideological level. The central societal distinction was now the one between men and women. This state of affairs created at the same time two other central themes, antisemitism and instinctive biological necessity. The essence of men was now much more a bodily sameness than a political or organizational identity. The borders to boundary crossings and emotional discourse remained open.

The main theses of the book, which are also the main results, are as follows: First, the discourse of the German educated elites on masculinity has to be regarded as a combination of this group's process of social identity construction and the homosocial gender structure of German societies. Second, this discourse was the result of a dialectical relation between ideas and practice, which from a gender perspective was both a boundary crossing and a boundary creation. These two forces were put up against each other in situations of conflict, while at the same time they supported and cooperated with each other. Third, this state of affairs created a social structure characteristic of Germany that delayed the breakthrough of the two-sphere model in the German discourse on masculinity. Fourth, the relation between border crossings and creation of borders changed after World War I, at the same time as the gender structure and discourse in society changed in form. Nevertheless, the prewar discourse on masculinity was still alive.

The War of Feelings is an important contribution both to our understanding of the masculine ideal of the German educated elites, but also for our understanding of masculinity. It is exciting reading, leaving the reader with a great deal of new knowledge about the mechanisms behind the creation of masculinity in a social group. Some of Ljunggren's conclusions alter the results of early scholarship rather than reverse them, which makes his occasional critical and bantering style unnecessary. His own results show that World War I was used as a means of proving masculinity, although a different one than shown by Theweleit and Mosse. From a gender perspective, the results showing an androgynous mas-

culinity are highly interesting and so is the fact that despite the lost war, this ideal continued to coexist with a discourse on masculinity based on biological difference and racism during the Weimar Republic.

However, Ljunggren's method is not always as transparent as I would have preferred. He has used texts written by the educated elite concerning masculinity, but also secondary literature. Neither the fact that the authors of these texts belong to different disciplines, nor the different form of the texts, is discussed any further. This issue raises questions about the theoretical and methodological uses of discourse analysis. While Ljunggren uses it as a method, aspects of ordinary text analysis, including criticism of the relevant sources, are absent from further discussion. Thus, the reader is left with further questions: was there any tension in this process of creating the discourse? What elements outside the group of the educated elite impacted this discourse? Moreover, Ljunggren does not discuss any limits for his choice of sources. How much of the production of the educated elite was concerned with masculinity? The question is how representative this sample is, and what it can tell about the process of creating and upholding the discourse of androgynous masculinity. Which other factors were decisive in their fight for status?

The discussion of previous scholarship is mainly limited to studies on German masculinity, and research on gender relations is used in a rather approximating sense. Feminist researchers have increasingly questioned the separate-spheres model of private and public in the last few years, a discussion which is not mentioned in this monograph. In addition, the fact that several recent studies have pointed at the importance of civil status as a marker of difference between women could have raised questions in connection with the educated elite. Was marital status of any importance for the discourse on androgynous masculinity? The choice of the material on Max Weber is one of the instances where a combination with newer research would have been helpful. Researchers have recently stressed the fact that Weber was married to one of the important German feminists, but Marianne Weber, who for a long period had fought for a reform of marriage law, is not mentioned. It is well established that she had an impact on Weber's ideal of masculinity. She was also involved in a discussion with Georg Simmel on the woman question. This example shows, of course, that the educated elite was not totally cut off from all women, and neither probably from the creation of the discourse on masculinity.

As this book was published in Swedish, it will only be accessible to a small public. Occasionally, I had the impression that the discussion of masculinity was intended as a contribution to the Swedish debate on gender and masculinity. Swedish gender historians have defined masculinity as at the same time broader than femininity and more static than flexible femininity.[1] Ljunggren's results show that we have much more work to do before we can draw more general conclusions about masculinity. The example of androgynous ideals of masculinity created by the German educated elite shows that masculinity differed over time and in space, but also between different social strata.

In sum, the book leaves the reader with an "Aha!" reaction, which makes it inspiring reading, well worth translation into German, or, considering its theoretical ambitions, into English. A more thorough editing than in the Swedish edition would be recommended. The way the volume is structured makes it an ideal reading for courses, with a strong theme and with surprising findings that may even make it suitable for broader audiences.

Notes

[1]. See Yvonne Hirdman, *Genus: om det stabilas fÃÂ¶rÃÂ¤nderliga former* (MalmÃÂ¶: Liber AB, 2001); and Anita GÃÂ¶ransson, "Mening, makt och materialitet: ett fÃÂ¶rsÃÂ¶k att fÃÂ¶rena realistiska och poststrukturalistiska positioner," *HÃÂ¤ften fÃÂ¶r kritiska studier* 31, no. 4 (1998): pp. 3-26.