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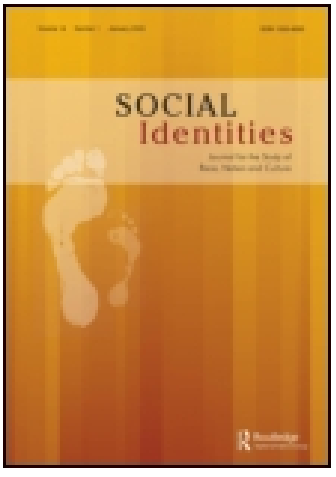

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Three phases of hegemonic whiteness: understanding racial temporalities in Sweden

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Three phases of hegemonic whiteness: understanding racial temporalities in Sweden

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After the election in Sweden in 2010, the racist Sweden Democrats party entered parliament. Post-election reactions and discussions were largely preoccupied with the issue of how the presence of a racist party in the Swedish parliament disturbs the country's exceptionalist image and privileged position – both in the West and in the non-Western world – as humanity's avant-garde and beacon for antiracism. This article aims to understand the current situation in Sweden from a critical race and whiteness studies perspective. We regard contemporary Sweden as a 'white nation in crisis', and diagnose Swedish society as suffering from a 'white melancholia'. In order to disentangle and shed light upon what is perceived to be mourned and what is seen as being lost for the future, the article offers an historicised account of three principal phases, stages and moments of Swedish nation-building and whiteness; 'white purity' (1905–1968); 'white solidarity' (1968–2001); and 'white melancholy', from 2001 onwards. The analysis also takes into account how these three nation-building projects and hegemonic whiteness and racial grammar regimes are interrelated, and intersect with the different gender and class relations; racial formations; minority discourses; and various political ideologies and affective structures characterising these three periods.

Keywords: hegemonic whiteness; white nation; Sweden; crisis; melancholia

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Introduction: a white nation in crisis

In 2010, the anti-immigration party the Sweden Democrats (abbreviated to SD) entered the Swedish parliament for the first time with almost 6 percent of the votes and 20 elected representatives.[1] Immediately after the election, a massive reaction that can almost be likened to an explosive eruption of militant antiracism took place within the establishment and among the elites, within academia, in the media, in the cultural sphere and among the creative classes in general. The then party leader of the Social Democrats, Mona Sahlin, stated that 'the Sweden Democrats are an un-Swedish phenomenon and shall remain so' (*Tidningarnas telegrambyrå,* 2010), and the biggest Swedish tabloid newspaper *Aftonbladet* initiated the antiracist campaign 'We like different' ('*Vi gillar olika*'), which soon was supported by more than half a million 'clicktivists'.[2]

Since then, the discussion has largely been preoccupied with the issue of how this new presence of a racist party in the Swedish parliament disturbs the exceptionalist image and the privileged position of Sweden, both in the West as well as in the non-Western world, as being humanity's avant-garde and a beacon for antiracism and everything that is considered to be good and progressive. Before the election, Sweden could pride itself on being one of

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very few European countries together with Portugal, Cyprus, Estonia, Ireland and Malta that still did not have a racist party in its national parliament, but after 2010 there is a widespread feeling that SD is nothing but an outright source of shame for Sweden.

Despite the presence of SD in parliament and the party's recent popularity according to the opinion polls as currently being the country's third biggest party, with around 15 percent of the electorate behind it, Sweden still tops the international lists as having the most thorough anti-discrimination legislation. It also harbours the most solid anti-racist population without any competition, judging from several recent rankings and reports that show that the proportion of Swedes categorised as being intolerant and as having a strongly negative attitude towards diversity and migration is said to be a world record low 4.9 percent (Huddleston, Niessen, Ni Chaoimh, & White, 2011; Mella, Palm, & Bromark, 2011).

At the same time, Sweden has recently, and rapidly, also become one of the most statistically segregated and segmented societies along racial lines, at least in the Western world, and particularly in respect of the residential and labour markets. For example, the disparity between native- and foreign-born adults with regards to being unemployed in Sweden is the highest among all OECD countries (Regeringskansliet, 2011). Also, when it comes to residential segregation, Sweden stands out in comparison with most other Western countries as having perhaps the most extreme racial segregation pattern in the OECD (Socialstyrelsen, 2010). A government report about the future of Sweden states that 80 percent of all Swedes rarely or never socialise with people of a non-European origin outside of working life, and while the poverty and unemployment rate among white majority Swedes and white migrants from Europe and North America, who also share a residential pattern of living in highly segregated white dominated areas, has decreased within the last decade and stands at around 5 percent, the opposite has been the case for non-Western and non-white migrants and minorities, whose poverty rate is around 30–40 percent (Regeringskansliet, 2013).

Another worrying finding is that this segregation and segmentation pattern seems to be transferred to and is 'inherited' by the children of migrants, the so-called 'second generation' who were born and grew up in Sweden. Not surprisingly, this tendency mainly concerns those with parents from a non-Western country (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2010). Even non-white adoptees born in non-Western countries and multiracial Swedes born in Sweden with one parent from a non-Western country have been found to have problems establishing themselves on the labour market (Carlberg & Nordin Jareno, 2007; Statistiska centralbyrån, 2010). In the spring of 2012 for example, the unemployment rate among native-born majority Swedes above the age of 25 was just 3.4 percent, in spite of the global economic crisis, while the unemployment rates among immigrants and among young adults, in practice mainly the so-called 'second generation', is 4–6 times higher (*Tidningarnas telegrambyrå,* 2012). In total, more than two out of three of all unemployed in Sweden belong to these two categories, and the majority of them are Swedes of colour (*Eriksson,* 2011). This disparity does not always have to do with difference in educational level, and the same goes for residential preferences – it is increasingly a matter of being white or non-white.

Theoretical approaches: 'hegemonic whiteness' in Sweden

With this background as the point of departure, this article aims to map out the historical development of hegemonic whiteness in Sweden in relation to the shift from having been

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the international epicentre for scientific racism to becoming a global pioneer and beacon for antiracist politics and colour-blindness.[3] In this article, we offer an analysis of how white privileges can be maintained in a country ruled by a deeply cherished antiracist ideology as well as a strong gender equality policy. The focus of our analysis is the reproduction of Swedish whiteness and its continuity as a structuring principle for Swedishness over a longer historical period, beyond contrasting political and racial ideologies, including both overt race biology and antiracist colour-blindness. Whereas whiteness – as a site of power – intersects with other categories such as citizenship, culture, race, religion and ethnicity, our goal is to explore how whiteness as a structuring principle reproduces itself through different means over these apparently contrasting periods. We are in other words focusing on the *longue durée* of Swedish whiteness. Methodologically, we make use of a wide range of empirical material, such as primary and secondary texts, political documents and speeches, media material and various cultural productions in an analysis inspired by critical whiteness studies. We hope that this analysis will result in a locally specific understanding of whiteness in a Swedish context 'as a form of power [that] is defined, deployed, performed, policed and reinvented' through a multiplicity of practices (Twine & Gallagher, 2008, p. 7). Our analysis is influenced by Sara Ahmed's critique of white antiracism which 'allows people to relax and feel less threatened, as if we have already 'solved it' and there is nothing else to do' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 121). Ahmed argues that white antiracism, especially in its proudly radical version and perhaps particularly in its colour-blind stance, functions as a way of regenerating whiteness and regaining and upholding white hegemony in a postcolonial era and in a Western world marked by increased diversity.

To begin with, we regard contemporary Sweden as a white nation in crisis. By this, we mean the phantasmatic self-image of a nation which sees itself as always having been white, and continuously, and perhaps even desperately, struggles to find ways to accommodate non-whites within its state territory as well as within its national imaginary. This is similar to the way that Ghassan Hage (1998) analyses Australia as a white nation harbouring fantasies of white supremacy: a 'white nation fantasy is where white racists and tolerant, white multiculturalists both see their nation structured around a white culture which they control, with Aboriginal people and migrants as exotic objects' (Hage, 1998, p. 48).

To be able to unpack and shed light upon what is perceived to be threatened, and perhaps on the verge of being lost forever for the future, we start by introducing the concept of hegemonic whiteness in a Swedish setting, and go on to offer an historicised account of what we consider are the three principal phases and moments of Swedish whiteness, namely *the white purity period* (phase 1) between 1905–1968; *the white solidarity period* (phase 2) between 1968–2001; and *the white melancholy period* (phase 3) from 2001 and onwards. In the course of these three phases, Sweden has shifted from overt race biology and racial policies through official colour-blindness and multiculturalism to the current era's mourning of the past. In our analysis, we strive to understand the similarities between these three apparently different and contradictory time periods as a way of being able to understand what is being mourned today. We also take into account how Swedish whiteness is interrelated and intersects with the different racial formations and minoritisation processes, and with the different class structures and gender relations that characterise these three time periods, as issues of class and gender are always intimately intertwined with the production and reproduction of whiteness.

Contrary to the general attitude in Sweden which refuses to talk about any other 'ethnic' binary than that between 'Swedes' and 'immigrants', and in opposition to the

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antiracist condemnation in Sweden of speaking about race, we argue that whiteness is a pivotal analytical category for understanding a white nation in crisis and its intersection with class structures and gender relations. In this article, we are inspired by and apply the concept of 'hegemonic whiteness' such as Matthew Hughey (2012) makes use of in his study based on interviews with white antiracists and white nationalists in the US, where he finds that beyond the ideological self-definitions there are more similarities than differences between the groups in terms of white identities, white perspectives and privileges, and which taken together ultimately reproduce white supremacy.

Inspired by Raewyn Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' and borrowing from Amanda Lewis' (2004) idea of 'hegemonic whiteness', Hughey (2010, p. 1290) writes that this approach 'conceptualizes whiteness as a configuration of meanings and practices that simultaneously produce and maintain racial cohesion and difference in two main ways: (1) through positioning those marked as 'white' as essentially different from and superior to those marked as 'non-white', and (2) through marginalizing practices of 'being white' that fail to exemplify dominant ideals.' In contemporary Sweden, hegemonic whiteness is, for us, upheld through a colour-blindness that constantly reinscribes whiteness as the normative, yet unmarked, position that, for example, effectively forecloses, silences and excludes experiences of everyday racism among non-white Swedes. Even if colour-blindness is not unique to Sweden, the Swedish case is of particular interest due to its history of being the leading nation of race biology and scientific racism in the democratic West. In fact, we argue that antiracist colour-blindness has hampered the possibilities of bringing up any links between pre- and post-1968 Sweden. For example, when English-language higher education text books are being translated into Swedish, the word 'race' is usually translated as 'ethnicity', particularly in titles, and if the word 'race' is left as it is, a foreword, an afterword or a comment is often inserted in the Swedish edition of the book explaining that race is not relevant in Sweden.[4]

According to our understanding of hegemonic whiteness in Sweden, Swedish whiteness is a structure, an ideology and a system that includes antiracists as well as racists and whites as well as non-whites, regardless of political views. As George Lipsitz (1998, p. 2) formulates it:

> possessive investment in whiteness is not a simple matter of black and white; all racialized minority groups have suffered from it, albeit to different degrees and in different ways.

In other words, minorities can without doubt also identify with and strive to perform whiteness. The most important idea of the hegemonic whiteness of contemporary Sweden is that being white constitutes the central core and the master signifier of Swedishness, and thus of being Swedish. This means that a Swede is a white person and a non-white person is therefore not, and cannot *fully* become a Swede. This was evident for example when the media and the police reported and discussed the obviously racially motivated series of shootings of non-white Swedes in the Swedish city of Malmö carried out by a white male serial killer between 2003 and 2010. The victims were talked about as having an 'immigrant appearance' and a 'foreign appearance' (*Expressen,* 2010). Similarly, in August 2012, in connection with a robbery in the region of Värmland, the police stated in a press release that they were hunting a man with a 'Swedish appearance', indirectly referring to a white man (Bergström, 2012). Finally, in February 2013 when protests took place against the racial profiling of people of colour in Stockholm in connection with

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harsher migration regulations and a police hunt for irregular migrants, antiracists used the phrases people with a 'non-Swedish appearance' and with a 'foreign appearance' which were also used by the police in official statements (*Aftonbladet,* 2013).

By historicising hegemonic whiteness in Sweden, our goal is to shed light upon and deconstruct unexpected similarities between otherwise different time periods, including an analysis of the class structures and gender relations throughout the three phases of racial temporalities.

White purity: the foundations of Swedish whiteness 1905–1968

> For a nation, the preservation of the good qualities of the race is of extraordinary importance in the eternally on-going struggle between the nations. The nation's power, wealth and culture depend on that. Therefore, a mixture with a less valuable race is one of the greatest threats to an elevated people. (Citation from the Instruction book for soldiers, *Soldatinstruktion* (1930), in use in the Swedish army between 1929 and 1938)

Sweden's shift from an early modern state to a modern nation state largely took place in the 1800s and the early 1900s, when the country transformed itself from a Baltic empire and the dominant power in Northern Europe to a post-imperial state after the loss of Finland to Russia in 1809, and the dissolution of the personal union with Norway in 1905 (Jansson, 1990). Before that, Sweden was multicultural as well as multiracial due to a number of overseas colonies, settlements and trade stations in Asia, the Americas and Africa. The last of these, Saint-Barthélemy in the Caribbean, was sold to France in 1878. In our periodisation, we have therefore chosen to date the first phase or moment of Swedish whiteness to the years 1905–1968. The period begins with the year 1905, marking the end of what was then known as the United Kingdoms of Sweden and Norway. We call this first phase of hegemonic whiteness in Sweden the 'white purity' period, and we regard this period as a white nation-building project with keywords like homogeneity and social engineering.

The historical background to the above-mentioned equation between Swedishness and whiteness can, according to our interpretation, be traced back to the absolutely privileged position of the Swedes at the time of the historical construction of the white race, as being the whitest of all whites, and as a consequence, the elite of humankind itself (Hagerman, 2006). This myth of the Nordic race was hegemonic for almost 150 years and is arguably still very much the image of the Swedes as well as the Swedish self-image within the domain of beauty ideals and body aesthetics. According to Katarina Schough (2008), this idea can be traced back to the cult of the Nordic and its central place within Sweden's national imaginary, dating back at least to the early modern period. Because of this absolutely privileged position, which can be likened to a unique Swedish manifest destiny on a racial level, the country's scientific community excelled in 'race science' ever since Carl Linnaeus created the first modern scientific system for race classification in the mid-1700s, and Anders Retzius invented the cephalic index in the mid-1800s (Broberg, 1995).

In Sweden, the 'white purity' period is also connected to the construction of the Swedish welfare system in its Social Democratic 'golden age' version, and with the legendary and almost mythical nationalist *and* Socialist concept of *folkhemmet*, or the people's home (Björck, 2000). The concept was coined and claimed by both reactionary Conservatives like Rudolf Kjellén, a political scientist known principally as the inventor of the term 'National Socialism', and by Socialists such as Per Albin Hansson, the leader of the Swedish Social Democrats, and widely regarded as the

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founding father of modern Sweden, who initiated the Social Democrats' uninterrupted rule of the country for 44 years in 1932. The 'white purity' period symbolically captures the specific Swedish amalgamation of a racialised nationalism and a reformist Socialism (Dahlqvist, 2002). Concerning gender relations, while the housewife played a pivotal role during the founding years of *folkhemmet*, a time when most children grew up with a mother at home, due to the expansion of public childcare the housewife gradually and steadily disappeared from sight in high modernity Sweden from the 1960s onwards (Berggren & Trägårdh, 2006). For us, the free floating signifier of *folkhemmet* can both be translated as the 'people's home' and the 'race home', in other words the home for white Swedes, regardless of both class and sex, and we argue that this reading of *folkhemmet* explains why the word has been turned into such a powerful nostalgic legend in contemporary Sweden.

In 1909, some of Sweden's most internationally well-known and influential intellectuals founded the Swedish Society for Race Hygiene (*Svenska sällskapet för rashygien*) with the financial backing of the philanthropist Alice Wallenberg, who belonged to Sweden's most powerful industrialist and banking family (Broberg, 1995; Furuhagen, 2007; Ljungström, 2004). The society lobbied for radical biopolitical reforms to protect the Swedish nation from social degeneracy and proletarianisation, miscegenation and immigration, and a decreasing birth rate among the middle- and upper classes. Several key members of the society, such as Herman Lundborg, became the chief ideologists of Swedish race thinking and spread its gospel of privileging the Swedes as the purest and most noble of all white nations through popular scientific lectures, exhibitions and publications. Lundborg was also appointed as the first director of the Race-Biological Institute at Uppsala University in 1922, which was founded with the support of all political parties. In 1930, at the Stockholm Exhibition which symbolically marked the entrance of modernist Sweden on to the world stage, the Swedes were proudly presented as being the whitest of all whites in an exhibition hall showing the results of the body measurements of tens of thousands of Swedes which had been carried out by the Institute.

During the first half of the 1900s, as a result of the successful lobbying of the scientists and with the backing of the Social Democrats, a whole array of laws was passed in order to uphold the perceived purity of the Swedes, including an anti-contraceptive law; a restrictive abortion law; an adoption law characterised by a strong genetic thinking; a marriage law restricting those with inherited diseases and disabilities from marrying; a restrictive immigration law which became even stricter before World War II to stop Jewish and Roma refugees; the introduction of race biology in schools and the army and, above all, a sterilisation law to hinder the reproduction of the lower classes, and simultaneously to increase the birth rate among the 'better stock' (Gustafsson, 1996; Hirdman, 1989; Johannisson, 1991). The sterilisation program was in effect between 1934 and 1975, and turned out to be one of the most effective in the democratic world, resulting in the sterilisation of over 60,000 people. Moreover, it was both racialised, gendered, classed and heteronormative, as national minorities like the Travellers and the Roma were proportionally more targeted than majority Swedes, and as 90 percent were women, mostly belonging to the lower- and working-classes, and many deemed to be sexual transgressors of the patriarchal order of the day (Broberg & Tydén, 1991; Tydén, 2000).[5]

As homogenisation was the leading governing principle in the creation of the modern Swedish nation-state and the people's home, it comes as no surprise that it was the minorities who had to bear the brunt of this policy. All minorities, and particularly the Jews, Roma and Travellers, were heavily stereotyped in the public culture, while their immigration from other parts of Europe to Sweden was strongly restricted or even

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forbidden, especially at the time of persecution and genocide before and during World War II. In 1935 for example, the government disseminated educational material about the Roma and the Sámis to the schools, which was strongly racialised (Lindgren, 2002). Moreover, forced assimilation aiming at outright cultural and linguistic extermination was used against the Sámis and the Finnish minority in Northern Sweden (Andersson, 2000; Catomeris, 2004; Lundmark, 1998; Wright, 1998). The 'racial formations' that took place during this period, to use the term developed by Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1986), also included the use of race as a category in the Swedish population register and the creation of specific census lists of the Swedish Jews, Roma and Travellers.

White solidarity: the construction of 'good Sweden', 1968–2001

> Muddy race theories have never got a foothold here. We readily consider ourselves to be without prejudices and tolerant. (From Olof Palme's radio speech 'We and the foreigners', '*Vi och utlänningarna*', on Christmas Day 1965)

The second phase of hegemonic whiteness in Sweden concerns the 1968–2001 period. During this time, Sweden became the leading Western voice for antiracism and a political, economic and moral supporter of anticolonial movements around the world. We have chosen to call this second moment of Swedish whiteness the 'white solidarity' period. We are aware that this white cosmopolitanism and white utopianism nation-building project did not simply start during the iconic year of 1968, as it can be already traced back to the first half of the 1960s, when a radicalisation of the Left took place, including both the Social Democrats and the Liberals, inspired by decolonisation and Third World liberation (Östberg, 2002).

As much as Swedish society previously had been deeply engaged with race thinking and racial politics, this time the labour movement, women's movement, Christian movement and other social movements with all their leaders, intellectuals and activists contributed to making Sweden the world's most radical proponent for antiracism, at the same time constructing itself as a colour-blind country, and thereby almost overnight transforming racism into a non-Swedish issue. For example, when Sweden took part in the pioneering transnational adoption of non-white children to the West in the 1960s, Third World solidarity paired with colour-blindness was the governing norm, together with the then very convincing, but nonetheless historically incorrect, argument that as Sweden had not had any overseas colonies like other European countries, there was no racism in Sweden, as Swedes had never been racist oppressors of others, and therefore the country was the most welcoming and suitable in the West to take in children of colour for adoption by whites (Hübinette, 2012b). According to Hanna Markusson Winkvist (2005) who has studied the ideological framework during the early years of transnational adoption to Sweden, an adoption agency representative wrote that '. . . coloured children are not exposed to any racism – to stare or to ask stupid questions is not impudent but a sign of human curiosity. A child who is integrated cannot be discriminated against.'

This transformation from having believed in and cultivated perhaps the most racialised and homogenising nation-building project in the democratic world, to elevating antiracism as the leading guiding principle may appear contradictory and paradoxical at a first glance. However, it is precisely this enormously successful nation-building and nation-branding project of constructing and promoting 'good Sweden' as being the most tolerant and progressive of all white nations which makes it possible for us to claim that this was a shift

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from one regime of hegemonic whiteness to another. We suggest that these two regimes of hegemonic whiteness were not fundamentally different projects before and after the 'turning point' of 1968. Rather, the radical and progressive social movements of the time created a new regime of white supremacy. We argue that proclaiming 'good whiteness' was in fact the ultimate white position in this era of decolonisation and civil rights movements, and Sweden without doubt played this part *the best*.

Before that, Sweden had played an absolutely vital role in the construction of the white race and of race thinking itself, both as the projection ground *par excellence* for what can be called whiteness deluxe, and as a world-leading knowledge production centre for scientific racism. This time, Sweden again played an equally if not even more crucial role during and after the dramatic years of decolonisation and the civil rights movements in the 1960s and 1970s, by creating a new kind of antiracist whiteness for the future at a time when the final and violent end of Europe's global empires had resulted in both a fundamental crisis regarding the centuries-old belief in white supremacy, and even in a crisis for whiteness itself. We argue that Sweden therefore contributed to preserving whiteness in the new postcolonial order, and in a new society characterised by increased diversity due to postcolonial migration, as still being fit to continue to rule the planet, in spite of the fact that the colonies were now politically independent.

One result of this second phase of Swedish whiteness is that Sweden has proportionally taken in refugees and migrants from the non-Western world to a degree that is comparable with the much larger European countries such as the UK, the Netherlands and France (Hübinette 2007, 2012a). Immigrants from non-Western countries started to arrive in Sweden in smaller numbers in the 1950s, but the majority arrived from the second half of the 1970s, and particularly in the 1980s and onwards, when refugee immigration took over from labour immigration. Statistically speaking, non-Western migrants have dominated immigration to Sweden since the end of the 1990s, and today around 15 percent of the Swedish population has a non-Western background (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2010).

Another central aspect of the construction of 'good Sweden' are the achievements in gender equality, linked to the welfare state and perhaps best immortalised in the figure of the liberated and independent career woman and the 'working mother' in a dual-earner household model (Borchorst & Siim, 2008). Sweden has come to be regarded as exceptionally 'woman-friendly' and is ranked as one of the most gender-equal societies in the world, along with the other Nordic countries. In the early 1970s, gender equality was firmly incorporated within Swedish society through the introduction of a whole series of progressive laws. During this phase, Swedish society shifted from a *housewife contract* in phase 1 (in which women depended on their individual husbands), to a *gender-equality contract* (in which the housewife duties were taken over by strong public institutions providing substitutes for husbands' care-giving) (Hirdman,1988).

The foundation of this gender-equality contract included, among other things, the presence of a strong public sector; the individualisation of the taxation system within the core family sphere (Hoffman, 1971); an affordable public childcare service; 16 months' paid parental leave covering up to 80 percent of one's salary; universal child benefit until the age of 16; as well as a general child and national health insurance) –all efforts to make women not have to choose between family and working life (Lindvert, 2002; Lundqvist, 2007).

Nationally, the foundation of modern Sweden was built upon the idea that the working and middle-classes shared the need for a welfare state, and thus also shared

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a positive view of a state-funded general public welfare system and the existence of strong trade unions. In combination with the growing welfare state, the use of domestic workers in the household among the growing new middle-class ceased during this time period, and women and men were now expected to share the housework in their complementary roles of 'working mothers' and 'caring fathers' (although with women in practice still taking the main responsibility) (Eriksson & Pringle, 2006, p. 107). Furthermore, it has been argued that the state-sanctioned and institutionalised gender equality discourse also carries with it a sense of national identity which is intimately intertwined with whiteness, and which particularly excludes migrants of colour in relation to the very notion of gender equality: they are imagined and marked as inherently patriarchal (de los Reyes & Mulinari, 2005; Keskinen, Tuori, Irni, & Mulinari, 2009).

Finally, perhaps the most significant legacy of this second hegemonic whiteness period in Sweden is the strong adherence to a wilful colour-blindness, in the sense that race as a concept and as a category was completely abolished on a governmental and official level, as well as in the academia, and is today considered to be completely irrelevant and obsolete in the contemporary Swedish context – since human rights, democracy, social justice, gender equality and antiracism seems to be already achieved. It is this hubris-like image of 'good Sweden' as a non-racist utopia with no colonial past whatsoever that is beginning to wane and fall apart today, and to which we will return in the concluding section.

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White melancholy: a white nation in crisis, 2001–present

> It is of course difficult to condition the right to seek asylum by signing a contract. But the purpose is for us to transfer important Swedish values on equality. (From a radio interview with the governing Conservative Party spokesman Per Schlingmann in October 2008 in a discussion about introducing a test and a contract on Swedishness for immigrants)

We have chosen to make use of the year 2001 as the beginning of the third phase of hegemonic whiteness in Sweden, when the 'War on Terror' broke out and when Sweden became an operative member of the Schengen agreement and consequently a full part of the European border control and migration regime. It is not the year itself that is important to us but the affective structure of contemporary Sweden which we are aiming to diagnose.

This period is generally characterised by a neoliberal economy and a Neo-Conservative culture, by the dismantling of the welfare state and its replacement with a workfare regime, by colonial nostalgia, by the illiberal turn and Islamophobia, and by a general crisis mentality and feelings of fear and anxiety concerning everything that is regarded as foreign, non-white and non-Christian (compare Lentin & Titley, 2011). In post-9/11 Sweden, the 'fear of terrorism' has also been institutionalised through stricter asylum laws, the surveillance of communication technologies, and an intensified collaboration with NATO and US American intelligence agencies. It is within this *Zeitgeist* or spirit of the time that we in this last section shall analyse the third phase of Swedish whiteness which we call the 'white melancholy' period.

In the 2010 election and even more today when the Sweden Democrats has become the third biggest party in the opinion polls, both ethnic and class boundaries are less important than the category of whiteness. We here regard the cultural notions of whiteness as constantly reformulated and renegotiated (Warren & Twine, 1997).

This explains why the Sweden Democrats are able to rally support from previously racialised migrant groups like Finns and Eastern and Southern Europeans, and even from Christian minorities from the Middle East, and mixed and adopted Swedes of colour who can join together with native working-class and middle-class Swedes around the notion of whiteness, and through what can be called 'the wages of whiteness' to paraphrase David Roediger (1991). Applied to a Swedish context, the theory of the 'wages of whiteness' complicates the traditional Swedish alliance between the working-class and the middle-class centred around the idea of social equality and economic redistribution by way of the welfare state as something that benefits both groups. Instead, this former alliance is nowadays gradually being replaced by an alliance of whiteness. As the working class has become increasingly non-white, this whiteness alliance strives to defend the 'Swedish values' institutionalised in welfare politics rather than defending class solidarity. This reveals the institutionalised values of whiteness in welfare politics where white Swedes 'cohere to form the edges of such spaces' (Ahmed, 2007, p. 157). 'Immigrants', that is non-white Swedes, cannot be *givers* to the welfare system, but only *takers* according to this new racialised class politics in phase 3. This new white alliance also reflects the importance of Christian values in the maintenance of Swedish whiteness, and is therefore closely connected to lslamophobia in contemporary Swedish society.

The Swedish discourse of gender equality also constituted an important aspect in the 2010 election as SD portrayed itself as the sworn enemy of Islam and its 'patriarchal excesses', and the protector of Swedish women as well as of LGBTQ politics. The party's electoral breakthrough may therefore symbolically be interpreted as a reinstallation of a certain white masculinity. In order to maintain the perceived unique Swedish form of gender equality, the key marker from phase 2, non-whites tend to be depicted as the 'non-gender equal', and this particularly concerns Moslems, who are also represented as being homophobic. As '… White men and White women enjoy shared racial privileges provided by Whiteness' (Collins, 1998, p. 65), white feminists may identify with what other scholars have called a hegemonic feminism sometimes allying itself with xenophobic ideologies (de los Reyes & Mulinari, 2005; Liinasson, 2010).

Interestingly enough, a Neo-Conservative family trend is nowadays also being found and expressed in a new housewife ideal, or at least the nostalgic romanticising and aestheticisation of the housewife, and of the domestic sphere in general, something discernible in the ever-present retro trend within fashion, interior design and lifestyles in general. This is well in line with SD's yearning for a pre-1968 model in terms of gender relations, and it is represented by white middle- and upper-class women who have decided to stay at home instead of choosing a career. Such a heavily racialised bifurcation and stratification of the gender equality discourse reflects the ideological function that the white family plays in the construction of the white nation as naturalising gendered and national boundaries, and indeed how family values nurture nationalistic ideals, and, in the end, the reproduction of Swedish whiteness. A material effect of this conservative trend is the dramatically increased use of domestic workers, a more or less absent practice and group in phase 2. According to official statistics in 2011, 410,000 or 5.5 per cent of Swedish taxpayers had received tax reductions for hiring domestic service workers since the legislation was introduced 1 July 2007, most of them being high earners belonging to the white majority population (Gavanas & Calleman, 2013). Such practices can be seen as a form of a 'moral economy of whiteness' in which the associations between cleanness and whiteness/Swedishness, on one hand, and dirt and non-whiteness/foreign-ness on the other, is crucial (Garner, 2007).

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Gender equality was a key issue in the launching of the reform, as it was introduced to solve the continuous unequal division of reproductive domestic labour between men and women (Kvist & Pettersson, 2010). But while (live-in and live-out) domestic workers in 1930s Sweden reflected a gendered class system, the current domestic worker is principally a foreigner and/or a non-white woman. In our analysis, employing a domestic worker therefore constitutes a central aspect of the phase 3 vision of the white woman as the modern and gender-equal mother and employer, be it as a housewife or as a career woman, within a discourse that invisibilises and liberates men from domestic duties. While gender equality is not necessarily racialised per se, the discourses of gender equality, Swedishness, nationality, and whiteness tend to overlap (Carbin, 2010; Keskinen et al., 2009). Accordingly, we argue that the white woman in the current phase represents a number of tasks – such as the reproduction of national, ethnic and racial boundaries, and values – depicted as hereditary 'Swedish' ones – such as the maintenance of gender equality, liberty and modernity. In this way, the gender equal relations between white women and white men are upheld through the domestic labour of minority women under the cloak of colour-blindness, and elements from both phase 1 and phase 2, that is the traditional house wife plus the modern career woman, are able to co-exist in phase 3. From this analysis, we argue that the foreign and/or non-white domestic worker also carries the task of maintaining official Swedish gender equality according to its phase 3 version of hegemonic whiteness in Sweden, both discursively and materially.

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White mourning and melancholia

Our diagnosis of Swedish whiteness in its contemporary state of crisis is that it is suffering from what we conceptualise as a white melancholia in the sense that 'old Sweden', that is Sweden as a racially homogeneous nation, and 'good Sweden', that is Sweden as a politically progressive nation, are both perceived to be threatened because of the presence of people of colour within the Swedish body politic, a presence that is being blamed for both destroying the nation's homogeneity and for making the Sweden Democrats the third biggest party in the opinion polls. Consequently, both the reactionary camp and the progressive camp are deeply affected by and implicated in the contemporary crisis of the Swedish nation. According to our hypothesis, the Sweden Democrats' longing for a homogenous *folkhemmet*-Sweden – during the 2010 election campaign expressed in the catchy slogan, 'Give us Sweden back!' ('*Ge oss Sverige tillbaka!*') –is therefore something with which the progressives also can identify. It is important to mention here that the antiracist movement in Sweden as well as the feminist movement is heavily dominated by white Swedes. This demographic make-up further locates racism as well as sexism outside of normative Swedishness, naturalising practically all white Swedes as *both* being feminists and antiracists. In other words, all white Swedes are today taken for granted as being gender-equal and non-racist, as feminism and antiracism have become central core traits of Swedishness.

Although there are parallels to the British post-imperial melancholia which Paul Gilroy (2005) writes about, and which has inspired our analysis of the psychic state of contemporary Sweden, what characterises the specific white melancholia in Sweden is the idealisation of a homogenous past through the combination of the 'white purity' and 'white solidarity' periods of Swedish whiteness. It is this double-binding force of both having been perceived as the most racially homogenous and pure population of all white nations, and of having been world leaders on a moral level as the most progressive and antiracist country in the world, which produces all these seemingly contradictory feelings.

This state of aporia also makes it almost impossible to deconstruct Swedish whiteness and ultimately to transform Swedishness into something else, within which people of colour will also be accepted and treated as Swedes. When the object of love is threatened or even on the way to being lost forever, meaning both old white Sweden and good antiracist Sweden at the same time, there is nothing left but this white melancholia, filled with limitless pain and trapped in a desperate but nonetheless futile yearning for the past, and a complete inability to imagine any constructive future.

Finally, we believe that our analysis of the three phases of hegemonic whiteness in Sweden and our 'white melancholia diagnosis' might be useful to apply also to other white nations in crisis. We think that it might be a valuable contribution to the field of race and whiteness studies to be able to understand both the European Far Right and the American Tea Party Movement, and why they are so successful in activating certain affective structures. For example, the regressive retro aesthetics and the fascination for and idealisation of everything that predates 1968, that is to the time of more traditional class structures and gender relations, and perhaps above all to the time of late colonialism and segregation when the majority of the population was still white, are arguably widely present not just in Sweden but in many Western countries. Further, our approach may also contribute to understanding the present crises of white antiracism as well as of white feminism and of white progressive politics in general, all of which are struggling to grapple with a new era and a new world that is rapidly becoming more and more diversified and less and less white.

In the future, it is our conviction that the disentanglement of Swedishness from whiteness is absolutely necessary in order to be able to deconstruct a Swedishness which does not allow non-white Swedes to be Swedish. This form of Swedishness also traps white Swedes in this melancholic state through the aporia-like double-edged images of the phantasms of 'old Sweden' and 'good Sweden', that is through the longing for and the mourning of the passing of both the first and the second phases of hegemonic whiteness in Sweden. Our hope for the future is therefore that a transformative moment will come true, open up and unlock this current regressive closure which we diagnose as 'white melancholia'. This will allow the necessary and definitive demise of both 'old Sweden' and 'good Sweden'. However, in order to be able to accomplish and reach this moment of transformation it is absolutely necessary to acknowledge the fact that the object of love is irretrievably and irrevocably lost forever, no matter how painful that may be to take in and accept.

Notes

1. SD was founded in 1988, and has its direct historical roots in the Swedish National Socialist and Fascist movement, a fact that makes the party different from the other Nordic anti-immigration parties which all have a right-wing populist background (Ekman & Poohl, 2010). This new presence of the party in the Swedish parliament has been found to be mainly caused by feelings of dissatisfaction among certain demographic segments of the electorate related to class and gender, especially male working-class and lower middle-class voters of both native and foreign background who otherwise might have supported the Social Democrats (Hellström, 2010; Rydgren & Ruth, 2011).
2. See the homepage of the campaign http://www.aftonbladet.se/vigillarolika.
3. This is a development and continuation of an article that was published in *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* (Hübinette & Lundström, 2011).
4. See for example Lynn S. Chancer's and Beverly Xaviera Watkins' book *Gender, race, and class. An Overview*, from 2006, which in its Swedish language translation is entitled *Social Positions. An Overview* (*Sociala positioner. En översikt*, 2009), and where an afterword written by a Swede takes up the sensitive concept of race.

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5. Until the 1950s, especially the Travellers, *resande* or *tattare* in Swedish (the latter being a derogatory term), who can be compared to Travellers in for example the UK, were probably the most racialised minority in Sweden as they were considered to be the biggest minority, while the Roma minority which consisted of migrants from the Balkans and Eastern Europe was smaller at that time, although they were also subjected to racial politics.

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