



LUND UNIVERSITY

Division of Art History and Visual Studies
Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences
Lund University
Sweden

The Other in Contemporary Swedish Cinema
Portrayals of Non-White Swedes in Swedish Cinema 2000-2010

A Master's Thesis for the Degree Master of Arts (Two Years) in Visual Culture

Elina Svantesson

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Supervisor: Ingrid Stigsdotter

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ABSTRACT

DIVISION OF ART HISTORY AND VISUAL STUDIES / FILM STUDIES

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The evident place that film has in society makes it a powerful medium that journeys across borders of nationalities, sexualities, and ethnicities. Film represents, and since representation is of importance when acquiring knowledge and a continuous changing medium, it must be scrutinised continuously.

In this thesis, contemporary Swedish mainstream cinema (2000-2010) has been examined for its representations of immigrants, Arabs and non-white Swedes. Concepts of culture, identity and whiteness are used to make sense of these representations and politics is shown to have a strong impact on the medium.

Making use of the notion of “whiteness”, the thesis suggests that non-white Swedes are considered different to white Swedes. The Arab, for example, is given many negative traits previously seen in anti-Semitic, pre-WWII images of the Jew. Furthermore, many films were proven to exclude non-white Swedes from a depicted society, geographical and social. This exclusion of “the other” can be considered a representation in itself, a reflection of a divided Swedish society.

Non-white Swedes are a large group of people, and it is argued that instead of portraying a static, shallow image of non-white Swedes, the Swedish film industry and society, could benefit from anticipating a new cinematic society and by including this group.

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1. Introduction

This thesis aims to examine how non-white¹ Swedes are portrayed in contemporary mainstream Swedish film, focusing on the last decade: 2000-2010. Whiteness will be thoroughly explained in chapter two. The analysed films are outsourced from the Swedish Film Institute's (SFI) statistics² over the top ten most viewed films in Sweden, each year, starting from 2000 and ending 2010. A selection was also made regarding the country of production (Sweden), and where and when the plot took place (contemporary Sweden).

The films are discussed through different aspects and divided into chapters according to these. Chapter two and three deal with aspects of exclusion (2. Whiteness) and "the other" (3. The New Jew). Exclusion is portrayed through *As It Is In Heaven* (Kay Pollak, 2004), *Varannan Vecka* (Måns Herngren, 2006), *Grabben i graven bredvid* (Kjell Sundvall, 2002), *The Wedding Photographer* (Ulf Malmros, 2009), *A Midsummer of Love* (Staffan Lindberg, 2009) and *Änglagård – Tredje gången gillt* (Colin Nutley, 2010).

The aspect of "the other" is seen in the films *Jalla! Jalla!* (Josef Fares, 2000), *Vingar av Glas* (2000, Reza Bagher), *Göta Kanal 2: Kanalkampen* (Pelle Seth, 2006), *Ciao Bella* (Mani Maserrat Agah, 2007), *Göta Kanal 3: Kanalkungens hemlighet* (Christjan Wegner, 2009) and *Farsan* (Josef Fares, 2010).

Key concepts: Culture, whiteness and identity

Culture, whiteness and identity (through "the other") are three key concepts in the analysis of the chosen films. Culture, as described by Hall,³ is an important link with peoples' identity, through history and social values. Most of the time I will refer to culture as a process, a way of interpreting meaning between and within a social group, through Hall's constructionist approach. This meaning can be, and has been, modified

¹ Explained through the concept of whiteness

² Swedish Film Institute, *Statistics* 2012, retrieved 15 May 2012, <<http://sfi.se/sv/statistik/>>

³ Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, 6th edn, Sage Publications: London, 2002, p.2

through different times in history. What is of interest is what meaning has been given to non-white Swedes in Swedish films today, and how this may affect Swedish society.

In this paper, whiteness is used in order to understand the way contemporary Swedish film portrays the other, what will be referred to as the “non-white”. Non-whites include all Swedish people who are not fair-skinned: Afro-swedes, Swedes with Asian grandparents, Swedes with a southern European look and so on. The non-white concept is based on looks, especially skin-colour and the action of differentiating between white and non-white derives from whiteness studies.

Whiteness studies derive from racism where “white” took the place of normality and where the body is the centre of attention. Dan Flory makes a reference to Noël Carroll who points to the frequent associations between racial whiteness, beauty and morality and racial “otherness”, ugliness and immorality in cinematic uses of horror and comedy.⁴ Black and white bodies have frequently been put in opposition to each other⁵ and a focus on the body derives from colonialism where black people were colonised by white colonisers. It can be regarded as a way of differentiating between master (white) and servant (black), thus it has its background in racism. Through this concept it will be clear how non-white and white Swedes are portrayed different in Swedish cinema of today. Whiteness is thoroughly introduced and explained in chapter two.

Identity is who we are. Identity is what makes me “me” but it also puts “me” in context with other groups defined by culture, gender, sexual orientation. This identity can be fluid; it can traverse across groups. Through contextualisation, the “me” is given some meaning. Furthermore, identities are not only made up of who we are but also how we are perceived, how we are represented. All representation is first embedded in the language (the real) and then in the culture, institutions and the political character of the representer. The other is found and based in identity.

According to the *Dictionary of Critical Theory*, the meaning of the term other refers to “one pole of the relationship between a [subject] and a person or thing defined

4 Dan Flory, “Race” in Paisley Livingston, *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Film*, Routledge: New York, 2009, p.231

5 Alan Read, *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*, Bay Press: Seattle, 1996, bell hooks (intentionally uncapitalized), *reel to real: race, sex, and class at the movies*, Routledge: New York, 1996, George Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes: the Continuing Significance of Race*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers: Lanham ML, 2008

or constituted as a non-self that is different or other”.⁶ It only exists along with other subjectivities⁷ and can therefore be regarded as way of comparing subjects and pointing to what is different (it can be used to refer to what a society see as different). In chapter three *The New Jew*, the other is used in conjunction with whiteness to describe how the Arab has been made the other.

Why non-white Swedes?

Immigrants that come to a new place depend on the image that the new place and its people have of them for finding work, friends and to build a comfortable life. Immigrants can come from similar cultural circumstances or very different ones. Far from all non-white Swedes are immigrants and not all immigrants are non-white. Most immigrants in Sweden are for example Norwegians.⁸ In this paper, non-white immigrants will be referred to as non-white Swedes, including 1st, 2nd and 3rd generation immigrants since the focus lies on skin-colour, not whether the immigrant comes from Denmark or Iraq. It is of course not unproblematic to point to a large group of people based on their skin colour and looks but it has been necessary in order to point to the problematics of this group (these groups) in Swedish cinema. Also, it is preferable to use non-white rather than non-ethnic since non-white Swedes are not necessarily non-ethnic.

A lot of focus in the media and communications lie not with the immigrant as an immigrant (which would include all Finnish, Danish, Italian, Greek and all other immigrants), but rather with a person from a different background than that of a white Swede. For Hall, this background would be a person's culture, their meaning. For example, when the serial shooter in Malmö was discussed in media, he was immediately compared to “Lasermannen” who aimed his killing rage at immigrants, while in fact the serial shootings in Malmö mostly affected non-white Swedes born in Sweden.⁹

⁶ “other”, *Dictionary of Critical Theory*, Penguin Books: New York, 2001, p. 285

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ Statistics Sweden, *Immigrants and emigrants by country of emi-/immigration and sex. Year 2000-2011*, 2012, retrieved 15 May 2012, <<http://www.scb.se/>>

⁹ *Lasermansrapportering på skakig grund*, Swedish Radio, 2010, retrieved 15 May 2012

In contemporary Swedish cinema, non-white Swedes are portrayed different to that of white Swedes. Although non-whites are mainly differentiated through their skin colour, an accent or name can have the same effect. In chapter three, special attention is paid to immigrants from the Middle East and the way accents, names and body language are used to differentiate between them and white Swedes in films such as *Jalla! Jalla!*.

According to Irene Molina and Paulina de Los Reyes, science results from several disciplines show that non-Europeans are in the bottom of an existing ethnic hierarchic scale in Europe and the world, and that Nordic Europeans are at the top.¹⁰ Hynek Pallas refers to Nordic white people as the “crème de la crème” of whiteness.¹¹ These writers are not the only ones who have noticed and commented on this. I will also refer to Richard Dyer’s *White* and Ylva Brune’s work on the portrayal of immigrants and refugees in the Swedish press.¹² Brune finds that they have been depicted differently to that of the white Swede. In contemporary Swedish society the immigrant is an outsider, an other. How is this outsider portrayed in Swedish film? Can the cinematic portrayal of the non-white Swede be related to Swedish society’s portrayal of the same?

Why film?

As Sweden’s right wing party Sverigedemokraterna join the Swedish parliament in 2010, it is of relevance to understand how non-white Swedes are portrayed not only by these parties, but also in films subsidised by the government. Film is an important medium in creating images of places, people, cultures, religions etc., and through film, a wide audience become cognizant of these images.

People from all cultures, age groups and classes go to the cinema more or less every year.¹³ It is a medium available to just about anyone to view. Since I will be looking at the portrayal of non-white Swedes in films and try to connect this with non-

10 Irene Molina and Paulina de los Reyes “Kalla mörka natt” in de los Reyes P et al. *Maktens (o)lika förklädnader: Kön, klass och ras/etnicitet i det postkoloniala Sverige*, Atlas: Stockholm, 2006, p.293

11 Hynek Pallas, *Vithet i svensk spelfilm 1989-2010*, Elanders Fälth & Hässler: Mölnlycke, 2011, p.21

12 Ylva Brune, *Mörk magi i vita medier: svensk nyhetsjournalistik om invandrare, flyktingar och rasism*, Carlssons: 2001, Richard Dyer, *White*, 3 edn, Routledge: London, 1997

13 Marina Ghersesti, ”SOM Svenska biovanor 1988-2007”, SOM-institutet, 2008, retrieved 15 May 2012, < http://www.som.gu.se/digitalAssets/1275/1275018_2008_svenska_biovanor.pdf >

white Swedes in society, the medium's influence on viewers and society is interesting for this thesis. The discussion that some films generate, such as a concept like "immigrant directors",¹⁴ raise questions regarding the portrayal of non-white Swedes and could influence a greater debate of Swedes' place in their society.

As the last decade has seen an increase in right-wing politics and uprising of right-wing extremist parties making their way into parliaments across Europe, there seems to be an 'enemy' in the Muslim. Between the 1920s and the 1940s, the Jew was subjected to anti-Semitic portrayals in Swedish society. These will be thoroughly explained in chapter three since a connection can be made between these negative portrayals and today's portrayals of the Arab.

Much has changed in Swedish culture since WWII. After the war, Swedish industry lacked workers and for this reason visa requirements were removed for countries in Scandinavia, Italy, Greece and Spain. During the 1950s Fins came to Sweden to work with forestry and industrial work and in the 1960s Sweden had deals with Turkey and former Yugoslavia from which Swedish companies recruited workers. By the late 60s and early 70s, Greeks and Americans were looking for asylum in Sweden and during the 1970s Sweden helped refugees from Latin America to settle down in Sweden. In the 1980s more refugees arrived, mainly from the war zones in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and the horn of Africa. During the 1990s, the Balkan Wars led to a large population fleeing to countries like Sweden. Between 1984 and 2003 the biggest groups seeking asylum in Sweden came from former Yugoslavia, Bosnia – Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Iran and Iraq.¹⁵ A lot changed but despite this, the portrayal of Arabs in contemporary Swedish film has similarities with earlier portrayals of Jews.

Why then, has this paper focused on the filmic medium? Film is a form of entertainment that people from all classes partake in. Film cause debates and it is a way of socialising. The medium is itself fascinating and it is inspiring that people from all ages, sexes, genders, cultures and backgrounds enjoy this medium. It has become a huge part of society, why it is also important to scrutinise and question it.

¹⁴ See chapter three, "The New Jew"

¹⁵ *Flyktingar och invandrare sedan 1930-talet i Sverige*, The UN Refugee Agency UNHCR, 2012, retrieved 19 May 2012, <http://www.motallaodds.org/factualweb/se/2.3/articles/1930_talet.html>

Among many, Douglas Kellner and Sut Jhally argue film's possibilities to anticipate historical, political and social changes before they occur by portraying the possibilities.¹⁶

It has been said that film is closely related, even interlinked, to politics.¹⁷ Its influence has been widely debated but most people would agree that if many thousands or millions of people go to watch a film, they take something from that film with them when they leave. The film is likely to influence them in some way.

To come back to Stuart Hall's constructionist approach, cultural meanings are produced through social constructs that are never fixed. Films could seem to confuse the two worlds of materiality ("where things and people exist") and "the symbolic practices and processes through which representations meaning and language operate".¹⁸ Since films portray a reality on screen that is very similar to the reality outside of it, films could be thought to portray reality of some sort. Since representation on screen is close to reality, the screen needs to be scrutinised for the way it represents the other. When insisting on a stereotype (the Swedish Arab or other non-white Swede) it could become harder not to believe the existence of that stereotype.

Mills asserts that white supremacy in America cannot and should not be ignored, as it will not vanish just because we stop discussing it, because "actual social values and enduring socio-economic structures will continue to reflect the history of white domination".¹⁹ Perhaps prejudice will not disappear by changing its portrayals in films but such changes might aid in anticipating a new society, a new culture that includes the non-white Swede in all parts of it. By recognizing prejudice, work can start working against it. Recognition starts by pointing it out, in all aspects of society. Non-white Swedes might not be the only group that is excluded from Swedish society or Swedish cinema, but to look at this large and varied group is a start.

It is now clear why it is important to analyse generated stereotypes not only in

16 Douglas Kellner, *Cinema Wars: Hollywood politics in the Bush-Cheney era*, John Wiley & Sons: Chichester, 2010, p.38, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, video recording, Dir. Jeremy Earp, Sut Jhally, USA, 2006

17 Jhally, *Reel Bad Arabs*, (2006)

18 Hall, *Representation*, p.23-25

19 Charles W Mills, "White supremacy" in Lott, T.L., & Pittman JP., *A Companion to African-American Philosophy*, Basil Blackwell: Malden MA, 2006

news and politics, such as Brune among others do,²⁰ but also in popular culture. Besides, as contemporary cinema constantly develops, there is always a need for new materials and analyses.

Chosen films

The films I have chosen are:

Jalla! Jalla! (Josef Fares, 2000), a comedy interesting for its revived use of some non-white Swedish portrayals. I write some because not all portrayals of non-white Arab Swedes in this film are “new” but several can be found rather demeaning and of anti-Semitic character, discussed in “The New Jew”. *Jalla! Jalla!* is also of interest to this paper as the director, Josef Fares is a non-white Swede himself, discussed in the same chapter regarding the matter on “immigrant directors”, together with Reza Bagher’s *Vingar av glas* (Reza Bagher, 2000).

Farsan (Josef Fares, 2010), another comedy by Josef Fares where just as in *Jalla! Jalla!*, the Arab man is portrayed as both greedy (again, a trait seemingly deriving from the Jewish stereotype in Swedish films and comic press of the 1920s and 30s) and untrustworthy. *Ciao Bella* (2007), *Göta Kanal 2: Kanalkampen* (2006) and *Göta Kanal 3: Kanalkungens hemlighet* (2009) all analysed and discussed for their portrayal of Italians. The two latter films are also interesting for their portrayal of “whiteness” in Swedes and their stereotype of Italians.

The Swedish box office hits, *As It Is In Heaven* (Kay Pollak, 2004), *Varannan Vecka* (Måns Herngren, 2006), *Grabben i graven bredvid* (Kjell Sundvall, 2002), *The Wedding Photographer* (Ulf Malmros, 2009), *A Midsummer of Love* (Staffan Lindberg, 2009) and *Änglagård – Tredje gången gillt* (Colin Nutley, 2010) for their exclusion of non-white Swedes.

20 Brune, *Mörk magi i vita medier*, Håkan Eriksson & Jacob Rennerfelt, *Folkhemmets Balkanisering: Diskrimineringskulturens baksida*, Ekerlids Förlag: Stockholm, 2009, Carina Lundström, *Svenska Latinas: Ras, klass och kön i svenskhetens geografi*, Makadam: Stockholm, 2007, de los Reyes, P. et al. *Maktens (o)lika förklädnader*

Chapters

Chapters two and three present the outcome from the case studies. Films will be discussed in “The new Jew” and “Whiteness”. In the fourth chapter “Film and Society” I try to make sense of how society is reflected in film, and if films leave a mark on society.

In the chapter titled “Whiteness”, whiteness is described as a concept that can be used to make sense of representations on screen. With the help of Richard Dyer, bell hooks, Molina and de los Reyes the concept is clarified. It is explained how whiteness is used to make sense of the images of non-white Swedes. Hynek Pallas recently wrote *Vithet i svensk spelfilm 1989-2010* (2011) which deals with the issue of whiteness in Swedish films from the last two decades. Pallas has found that there is a difference in how different skin colours are portrayed on the Swedish screen and asks if the portrayal on screen can be linked with how the audience interact with different skin colours in the real world. The first part of this chapter is crucial to the essay as it is through the concept of whiteness that the reader can understand the portrayals of non-whites. Within this chapter, the invisibility of non-white Swedes will also be discussed, as most films from the last decade does not include any non-white Swedish characters whatsoever.

“The New Jew” deals with representations of non-white Swedes and in particular Arabs. I introduce “The New Jew” which refers to the portrayal of the Arabic man in some Swedish films. Wright, Gustafsson and Andersson all point out how in the Swedish films and comic press of the 20s and 30s, the Jew was characterized by a person with a big nose, large hand gestures and an unhealthy interest in money.²¹ All three writers give several examples of how the Jew has been targeted in society and film before WWII. I have found that while the demeaning Jewish character no longer exists in Swedish films today, the Arabic man has been given these characteristics instead, thus the Arab is referred to as the New Jew. Through whiteness, “the New Jew” is also put in

21 Rochelle Wright, *The Visible Wall: Jews and Other Ethnic Outsiders in Swedish Film*, Uppsala Universitet: Uppsala, 1998, Tommy Gustafsson, *En fiende till civilisationen: Manlighet, genusrelationer, sexualitet och rasstereotyper i svensk filmkultur på 1920-talet*, Sekel Bokförlag: Lund, 2007, Lars M Andersson, *En jude är en jude är en jude: Representationer av "juden" i svensk skämtpress omkring 1900-1930*, Nordic Academic Press: Lund, 2000

context with the Swedish society.

Religion is another attribute given some thought in this third chapter. In the cinematic Sweden, Arabs and Muslims become an entity, as if the two were not separated. According to Dilsa Demirbag-Sten, this is also visible in Swedish media and society.²² Although a great deal of Arabs might be Muslims, the way their religion has been placed upon their character is different to how the white Swede and their religion are portrayed.

The fourth and last chapter “Film & Society” provides some understanding of how society and film are interlinked. There is a debate regarding media’s influence on society commonly referred to as “the Media Effects Debate”. This chapter tries to make sense of some views of what effect media and film has on the viewer. However, there seem to be as many opinions as there are opinion makers and while my aim is not to discuss them all, I comment on some of the views and connect the debate to representations in film.

In my attempts to connect film and society, a lot of research has ended up dealing with American films and American society. Most of what has been said on racism, class and gender in films deal with Hollywood cinema. Evidently, some notions and ideas are not transferrable to the discussion on contemporary Swedish film and therefore these writings are combined with theories that are applicable to Swedish cinema.

Douglas Kellner writes how, in America, the political society has influenced cinema.²³ He makes references to how American society took part in political conflicts that could then be tracked on screen. American television is also criticised in a recent article by Jon Caramanica in *The New York Times*, for failing to depict non-whites.²⁴

American author and social activist bell hooks writes in her book *Killing Race, Ending Racism*, that there exists a kind of denial in European white culture that excludes non-whites.²⁵ She also questions the way white people take their role, in opposition to the role of non-whites, in society for granted.²⁶ This questioning can be connected with

22 Dilsa Demirbag-Sten, ”Invandrare förblir alltid invandrare i Sverige”, *Göteborgsposten*, 7 Januari 2010,

23 Kellner, *Cinema Wars*

24 Jon Caramanica, “Broadcasting a World of Whiteness” in *The New York Times*, 25 April, 2012

25 bell hooks, *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*, Henry Holt and the Company: New York, 1995, p.4

26 hooks, *Killing Rage*, p.45

non-white Swedes and their role in Swedish society.

In Sweden, Asia researcher Tobias Hübinette focuses on Eastern Asians in his writings on Swedish critical race studies and whiteness. Hübinette connects the portrayals of Asians in Swedish media to the fact that the West is about to lose the economic power of the world, in favour of countries like China and Japan.²⁷ He also mentions that as a direct consequence of the political ongoing in Israel in the 1900s, the Arab changed from being a romantic, fantastic, erotic Arab to become an aggressive man with a beard.²⁸ Hübinette talks about race and how it can be difficult for the white majority of people to understand violations in images of non-white Swedes. To emphasise his argument, he gives the example of the controversial Muhammad cartoons in *Jyllands Posten*.²⁹ Lecturer and researcher Ylva Habel points to the importance of recognising different skin colours and how denying these has transformed “racialization from being a social problem to brown people’s private shame” in Sweden.³⁰

Finally, in my conclusion I connect the portrayals of non-whites in Swedish cinema with some points on Swedish society and media portrayals of these.

27 ”Bilden av den asiatiska mannen”, *Vetandets Värld*, 2009, radio program, Swedish Radio, Sweden, 17 February

28 *ibid.*

29 To read more on how the West reacted, see for example “The limits to free speech: Cartoon Wars”, *The Economist*, 9 February, 2006

30 Ylva Habel, “Whiteness Swedish Style”, in K Stephens, *Afrikansvenska röster*, Notis: Malmö, 2009, pp. 90-119

2. An exclusion of non-whites

Whiteness

In order to understand the portrayal of immigrants, second or third generation immigrants, Asian or Italian adoptees and so on, it is useful to grasp the concept of whiteness. This concept will bring clarity to how what will be referred to as non-white and white Swedes, are portrayed in contemporary Swedish films. To understand the portrayal of white Swedes is also to understand the portrayal of non-white Swedes. With the support of Hynek Pallas, bell hooks, Richard Dyer and Molina & de los Reyes and their writings on “whiteness”, it is clarified who is considered white in Sweden and who is not.

Whiteness is no new concept but previously discussed by many.³¹ Whiteness studies derive from racism where “white” took the place of normality and where the body is the centre of attention. Dan Flory makes a reference to Noël Carroll who points to the frequent associations between racial whiteness, beauty and morality and racial “otherness”, ugliness and immorality in cinematic uses of horror and comedy.³² Black and white bodies have frequently been put in opposition to each other.³³ There is a focus on the body which derives from colonialism where black people were colonised by white colonisers. It can be regarded as a way of differentiating between master (white) and servant (black), which has its background in racism.

To help clarify whiteness, Pallas mentions that he listened to a report on the radio regarding China-town in Washington where the reporter said that she spoke to “two black girls, an Asian woman and an elegant lady”.³⁴ Here the invisibility of the white lady is obvious, there is no reference to her skin colour like there is with the other two women. Pallas and the interviewer Johanna Koljonen conclude that words in media are

31 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 4th edn. Routledge: New York, 2001, *Hall Representation*, Pallas, *Vithet I Svensk Spelfilm*, Dyer, *White*, Habel *Whiteness Swedish Style*

32 Flory, ‘Race’, p.231

33 hooks, *Killing Race*, Read, *The Fact of Blackness*, Norman K Denzin, *Reading Race: Hollywood and the Cinema of Racial Violence*, Sage Publications: London, 2002, p.20-21, George Yancy, *Black bodies, white gazes: the continuing significance of race*, AltaMira Press; New York, 2008

34 Varför vi ska vara kritiska mot vita människors vithet, *Jättestora frågor med Johanna Koljonen*, 2011, radio program, *Sveriges Radio*, Sweden, 4 August 2011

powerful, that in media, 2nd generation non-white immigrants are portrayed as more different than for example the Koljonen (born and raised in Finland) or Pallas himself (born and partly raised in Czech Republic), and that this is due to their white skin colour.

Within whiteness studies, the concept of the other is constantly prevalent. Since whites are constantly privileged, the other takes the position of the unprivileged non-white. The privileged white, with whom whiteness is never questioned, is pointed out by Ylva Habel, Hynek Pallas and Richard Dyer.³⁵ On the concept of “other”, the Dictionary of Critical Theory refers to “[Kojève] (1947) [who] contends that self-consciousness exists only to the extent that it exists for another self-consciousness, and only to the extent that it is recognized by the other as existing. The paradigm for this relationship is the dialectic between the master and the slave, in which both parties strive for recognition in the eyes of their other. This relationship inaugurates a dialectic of desire, in which the subject strives after an object that is always in the possession of the other. Lacan will therefore say that man’s desire is the desire of the other.”³⁶ By differentiating between non-white and white Swedes in Swedish films, and due to the fact that whiteness in whites is not questioned, an otherness is given to non-whites. This is visible throughout this study.

Whiteness is a culturally constructed category³⁷ that needs to be discussed in order to dislodge it from its centrality and authority.³⁸ Whiteness has, through its centrality and authority acted upon non-whites in a racist manner that is current throughout the white society. Few advertisements, soap-operas, television-shows, films etcetera focus on non-whites. Hynek Pallas regards whiteness “a national symbol (...) central to being Swedish”³⁹ which aims to protect the notion of the European superiority.⁴⁰ For Molina and de los Reyes, an important pillar in Western racism is, except for the oppression of black people, the denial of the past.⁴¹ To deny Sweden’s or white people’s role in racism, is to continue and legitimize it. According to bell hooks,

35 Pallas *Vithet*, p.157, Dyer *White*, p.5, Habel, “Whiteness Swedish Style”, p.98

36 *Dictionary of Critical Theory*, 2nd edn, Penguin Books: London, 2001, p.285

37 Richard Dyer, “White” in *Screen*, vol 29, no. 4, 1988, pp.46

38 Dyer, *White*, p.10

39 Pallas, *Vithet*, p.21

40 Pallas, *Vithet*, p.24

41 Irene Molina & Paulina de los Reyes, “Kalla mörkret natt: kön, klass och etnicitet i det postkoloniala Sverige” in de los Reyes P et al, *Maktens (o)lika förklädnader*, Atlas Akademi: Stockholm, 2006, p.310

both white and black people nowadays “act like they do not have the slightest clue as to why black folks might want to separate, to be together in some corner, or neighbourhood, or even at some dining table in a world where [they] are surrounded by whiteness.”⁴² What hooks, Molina and de los Reyes refer to is the denial of history, a way of smoothing over the crimes done to blacks by whites that continues, through denial, to legitimise it.

For Pallas whiteness is something that needs to be discussed and points to the need to talk about the “outer significant”, the visible skin colour. Ylva Habel also implies the importance of making whiteness visible, since this would force white people to understand the white people’s position as privileged.⁴³ Habel continues to write that if white Swedes really noticed racism, “it would be necessary [for whites] to understand whiteness in relational terms, to concretely put their own skin colour in relation to the international, invisible systems that reward them for their whiteness and quietly sort out most of the brown people around them who could be their competitors for the job, or their fellow students, teachers, friends, colleagues, bosses, loving partners etcetera.”⁴⁴ Dan Flory writes on a “white gaze” that is an oppositional gaze, which concerns race and that it permits viewers to critically analyse representations of human beings with regard to race.⁴⁵ Catrin Lundström refers to Franz Fanon and his perspective on the white gaze, which monitors but does not recognize, and connects it with Foucault’s panopticon.⁴⁶ As a non-white in a Swedish white-context one feels surveyed and it has little matter if one really is or not. hooks refers to an “ethnographic gaze”,⁴⁷ when she describes how her white students cannot grasp that black people “critically assess white people from a standpoint where “whiteness” is the privileged signifier.”⁴⁸ In the below discussed films it will be revealed that in Swedish cinema, non-white immigrants are

42 hooks, *Killing Racism*, p.5

43 Habel, “Whiteness Swedish Style”, p.105

44 Habel, “Whiteness Swedish Style”, p.106 ”skulle det föra med sig nödvändigheten att förstå vitheten i relationella termer, det vill säga att de på ett konkret sätt började sätta sin egen hudfärg i samband med de världsomgripande, osynliga system som hela tiden belönar dem för deras vithet, och tyst sorterar undan merparten av de bruna människor runt dem som skulle kunna vara deras konkurrenter om jobb, eller deras medstudenter, lärare, vänner, arbetskamrater, chefer, kärlekspartners, etcetera.”, translation by author

45 Flory, ‘Race’, p.229

46 Catrin Lundström, “Svenskhetens utsida”, *Invandrare & minoriteter*, June 2007, p.8

47 hooks, *Killing Rage*, p.34

48 ibid

excluded from the work sector, from social life and culture in Sweden and one might argue that the only place where they are included are in their homes, together with family and friends, neighbours that share the same experience of exclusion from Swedish society. It could hence be argued that through the differentiated treatment done to them by society, they are subjected to a “white gaze”. Pallas and Habel point to a necessary change in mainly white people’s perception of themselves and their position, in order for non-whites to become equals.

Invisible non-white Swedes

Most films in contemporary Swedish cinema exclude or put non-white characters in the background, portraying a Swedish society made up by exclusively white Swedes and where friendship occurs only within the boundaries of the (own) white group. This is signalled through the lack of non-white Swedish friends of the white Swedish character. Such portrayals of white Swedes and their circle of (white) friends can be connected to the notion of whiteness.

A closer look at the most viewed contemporary Swedish films reveals that in most films there are very few non-white Swedish characters. Whether this is because an assumption is made by the filmmakers (casting, director, scriptwriter and so on) that there is no need for non-white characters or if it is for some other reason is not clear, but it is a fact that most of the films produced in Sweden today exclude non-white Swedish characters. The discussion aimed in this chapter is regarding the exclusion of these people. The so-called “immigrant films”,⁴⁹ *Mind the Gap* (Helena Bergström, 2007) and *Farsan* (Josef Fares, 2010) are not included in this discussion since they specifically deal with the issue of integration and immigration regarding this group. In six films from SFI’s list of most viewed films in Swedish cinemas⁵⁰ from the last ten years and that I have reviewed as part of my empirical research, (Kay Pollak, 2004), *Varannan Vecka* (Måns Herngren, 2006), *Grabben i graven bredvid* (Kjell Sundvall, 2002), *The Wedding Photographer* (Ulf Malmros, 2009), *A Midsummer of Love* and *Änglagård* –

⁴⁹ Discussed in chapter three

⁵⁰ Swedish Film Institute, *Statistics* 2012, retrieved 15 May 2012, <<http://sfi.se/sv/statistik/>>

Tredje gången gillt (Colin Nutley, 2010), the non-white Swede is excluded. As seen in the following analyses, he or she is excluded from the Swedish society, through a lack of relationships between white and non-white Swedes on the traditional, professional, social and geographical level.

Traditions

Every culture has its own wedding tradition. In *A Midsummer of Love*, the wedding between two white Swedes (Alex and his girlfriend) places non-white Swedes in the background. It is only white Swedes that holds a speech at the wedding reception or sits in the church. It seems Alex and his wife have no non-white friends or family. *A midsummer of Love* also portrays a traditional Swedish Midsummer-dinner party where the narrative centres on several characters during the night. As Alex, one of the film's main characters, points out; "everyone celebrates midsummer". The Midsummer dinner party includes adults, children, men and women, upper-class, middle-class, white and non-white Swedes. However included, the non-white Swede appears in the background and has no given place in the narrative or room for characterisation. The non-white Swede inhabits the periphery of Swedish traditions, he or she is excluded from the social celebrations.

For Benshoff and Griffin, the portrayals of Jews in American cinema also have an aspect of religion, which has made it harder for Jewish people to assimilate to the ideals of American whiteness in comparison with other groups, such as Americans of Irish or Italian origin.⁵¹ In Sweden, the immigrant must not rid his history or traditions to become integrated in the Swedish society. The lack of portrayals of Muslim traditions in Swedish films however, and the lack of consideration from the Swedish market⁵² might make it harder for a Muslim or other religious person to feel included in the Swedish society. More on this in "the New Jew".

⁵¹ Harry M Benshoff & Sean Griffin, *America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality at the Movies*, Blackwell: Malden Mass, 2004, p.68

⁵² Anja Alemdar, *Den mångkulturella marknaden 2006: En studie av invandrarnas köpkraft*, Timbro: Stockholm, 2006

Geography

In *The Wedding Photographer*, and the third sequence of *Änglagård* the viewer is introduced to different geographical places. Both films depict small villages on the countryside and the former also has several scenes played out in the big city of Stockholm. In this geography, the non-white Swede is absent.

In *The Wedding Photographer*, the protagonist Robin lives in small town, working-class Molkom but eventually moves to Stockholm to make it as a photographer. Through Robin, the audience is introduced to Molkom and some of its inhabitants. His sister gets married, he walks past teenagers with mopeds and he works in his dad's factory. None of these places include non-white Swedes. Additionally, this does not change as Robin changes scenery and geography. He goes to an upper-class wedding in Djursholm, a finer area of Stockholm, and out of maybe fifty wedding guests not even one could be considered non-white. The same could be said for the Christening the following day. Again, there are lots of guests but no sign of non-ethnic Swedes.

Änglagård – Tredje gången gillt, takes place in Västergötland, in the small fictional village called Yxared. The plot centres on Fanny's family and their history with the village and its inhabitants. None of the main-characters are non-white Swedes and a closer look at the background reveals that the only non-whites in Yxared are the two teenagers Lilly and Leia who were adopted from Belize in their early years.

In the protagonist Daniel, a renowned conductor, moves to Ljusåker, a small village in northern Sweden. Through Daniel's rediscoveries of the village where he was born, the viewer is introduced to the northern landscapes of Sweden and its residents, none of which are non-white.

Working environment

The working environment is at the centre of the plot in both *Grabben i graven bredvid* and *Varannan vecka* but again, there is no visible trace of non-white Swedes. In

Grabben i graven bredvid, the two main characters work on a farm and in a library. Their working environments are shown several times throughout the film and all their work colleagues and friends are white Swedes. In *Varannan vecka* the protagonist is a filmmaker named Pontus who pitches his next idea at an advertising agency. All the people working at the agency are white Swedes. Pontus's brother Jens is a doctor at a hospital. The hospital is seen through several scenes and all doctors and nurses are white Swedes except for one nurse who once shares the elevator with Jens.

Relationships

In addition to the exclusion of non-white Swedes in geographical, professional and traditional settings, there is also a lack of relationships between white and non-white Swedes. This becomes apparent through an exclusion of the latter. Hardly any family member or friend is non-white in the aforementioned films.

In *A Midsummer of Love*, Alex and Linnea holds a house warming party for their friends and families. Although there are plenty of guests at the party, there are no signs of non-white Swedes. This exclusion is prevalent yet again at their wedding where only white Swedes are among the guests.

As has already been pointed out, in the upper-class wedding and christening portrayed in *The Wedding Photographer*, none of the guests could be considered non-white. These six films all portray a very white Swedish society where the non-white Swede is excluded from traditional, professional, social and geographical settings. All focus lie on the white Swede and their character which is why a lack of representation creates a kind of invisibility of the non-white Swede.

Hierarchy within whiteness

Several writers also point to a social hierarchy within whiteness where the Nordic whites are regarded at the highest social level.⁵³ Molina and de los Reyes points to a marginalisation of non-European immigrants in the Swedish society that seems to stem from remains of the widespread racism in Europe during WW2.⁵⁴ Robert Stam and Ella Shohat also point to hierarchy as one of the key mechanisms in colonial-style racism, together with a refusal of empathy and a lack for history, sexual modesty and order.⁵⁵ In contemporary Swedish film, white Swedes stand in opposition to non-white Swedes. This creates otherness which could be linked to a denial of skin colour. In some of the analysed films, Italians are portrayed as the other, the very different. At the same time, Italians are regarded less different (more white) to Arabs on the whiteness scale which could explain why in the Göta Canal films, the Arab was replaced with the Italian.

Hynek Pallas and Ylva Habel comment on *Ciao Bella*'s (Mani Maserrat Agah, 2007) portrayal of the “regular” non-white Swedish family as unusual for Swedish film.⁵⁶ What Pallas and Habel refer to is the Iranian-Swedish family who lives in a “regular” villa in a “regular” little village. Here, “regular” could be replaced with “white” to clarify how non-white Swedes are excluded from Swedish film. In *Ciao Bella* there are “no comic relief-characters, like the father in *Jalla! Jalla!*, and no oppressing patriarchs. The parents are not symbols for something Else [Other]”.⁵⁷

Yet most of the time, the non-white Swede is ridiculed and given traits different to those portrayed as “Swedish” (what Dyer and Molina & de Los Reyes would call “white”). In *Göta Kanal 2: Kanalkampen* (Pelle Seth, 2006) and *Göta Kanal 3: Kanalkungens hemlighet* (Christjan Wegner, 2009) the portrayals of Italians stand in stark contrast with that of the Swedish. The films are part of a series that began with *Who Pulled the Plug?* (Hans Iveberg, 1981), a film which like its two sequels deals with a boat race on the Göta Canal. *Who Pulled the Plug?* portrays a wealthy Arab sheik interested in buying boats from the white Swedish man Andersson. The plots are more or

53 Pallas, *Vithet*, p.21, Molina I & P de los Reyes, 'Kalla mörkret natt!', p.293

54 Molina I & P de los Reyes, 'Kalla mörkret natt!', p.293

55 Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism; Multiculturalism and the Media*, 12th edn, Routledge: New York, 2007, p.23

56 “Nyfiken vit”, *FLM*, no. 4, 29 September 2008

57 Habel, “Nyfiken Vit”, “Inga comic relief-karaktärer – à la pappan i Josef Fares *Jalla! Jalla!*— och inga förtryckande patriarker. Föräldrarna är inte symboler för något Annat”, translation by author

less constant in all three films but there are some differences in the choice of non-white Swedish portrayals. In the second and third films, the people interested in Andersson's boats (and in his daughter Petra) are Italians. The Italians are portrayed as arrogant throughout the whole film (as they are about to start the boat race, one of them bursts out "I always win, even when I loose. I never lose"). Perhaps the change from an Arab sheik to Italians reflect an anxiety in the Swedish filmmakers, since Italian culture is better known, more popular and less controversial to make jokes about (in comparison with Arab culture which is more unfamiliar) in Sweden? The only film where the Arab man is portrayed as a comic relief-character since 2000 is *Farsan* (Josef Fares 2010). Perhaps because the film's director, Josef Fares is from Lebanon, it is more accepted for him to portray Arab's this way.

The Swedish man in the Göta Canal films is not depicted much better. He is ignorant in his attempts to speak English and he openly insults the Italian culture. This is supposedly humorous, but as Andersson refers to the Italian man as a "pizza baker" and "balloon salesman" and the Swedish policemen denotes Italian as a "pizza lingo" it is more ignorant than funny. The Italian men are sleazy and self-confident, in opposition to the insecure and goofy Swedish man, represented through Petra's boyfriend Henrik. They wear golden chains, moustaches and at one point, one of them expects the Swedish girl to give him a blowjob. The Italians' libidinousness nature stands in stark contrast to Henrik's behaviour. While the Swedish characters appear ignorant, and the Swedish man is portrayed as awkward, they are all presented as sweet and caring people by the end of the films while the Italian stereotype offers no alternative. They are not given any depth thus making it hard to empathize with them.

In *Vi hade iallafall tur med vädret. Igen* (Kjell-Åke Andersson, 2008) the non-white life-drawing teacher Miklos of Greek decent, is certainly not getting any empathy from the viewer. He is portrayed as a clearly over-sexual man who has an uncontrollable desire for the white Swedish woman Gun. He sexually harasses her both in class and in front of her husband Gunnar. Miklos is portrayed as closer to his feelings while white Gunnar is portrayed as unable to show love and affection. Additionally, Gunnar is seen as unable to comprehend changes in a modern society (he does not understand how the Drive-in at a hamburger restaurant works or what a "vegetarian" (vegetarian) is). He is

uninterested in places outside his own country yet by the end of the film, Gun loves him as a result of these quirky limitations. On another note, Gun and Gunnar's neighbour has a strong accent, and offers to fix "anything for a cheap penny" making him look a little like the Jew involved with a dubious business discussed in "The New Jew".

The portrayals of non-white immigrants, Greek and Italian men in Swedish films provide Swedish employers with the idea of non-white Swedes as sketchy, arrogant men with an over-sexual drive. The white Swede in the Göta Canal films and *Vi hade iallafall tur med vädret. Igen* is rewarded for their ignorant behaviour (the women loves them) while the non-white other is punished for the same behaviour.

Swedish statistics show that immigrants born outside of the Nordic countries are the first ones to be laid off during a recession, even if they have been employed for the same amount of time as non-immigrants.⁵⁸ This points to a hierarchy within immigrants where white ones from the Nordic countries sustain their jobs while non-whites outsiders lose theirs. Perhaps the portrayals of non-white Swedes in Swedish film, such as those of Italians can be connected to this. If Swedes are portrayed as white, as Pallas points out, then the Greek, Italian and other non-white Swedes can be considered "the other" here. This otherness, if transferred to the Swedish job sector, portrays "the other" in a way that is undesirable for Swedish employers.

⁵⁸ Anita Göransson, *Makten och mångfalden: eliter och etnicitet i Sverige: rapport från Integrationspolitiska maktutredningens forskningsprogram*, Norstedts Juridik: Stockholm, 2005, p.28

3. The New Jew

In addition to Italians and Greeks, another non-white character portrayed unfavourably in Swedish cinema is that of the Arab. Approaching contemporary Swedish cinema, it is unlikely one will find the greedy, hunch-backed Jew dealing with a suspicious business, mentioned in chapter one. Instead, these traits have been given to a new character, the Arab. In her book *Mörk magi i vita medier*, Ylva Brune point out that the word “immigrant” has often been used by the Swedish press to describe foreign-born criminal Swedes, creating a negative connotation to the word.⁵⁹ In Swedish films the Muslim⁶⁰ or the Arab is commonly referred to as “the immigrant.”⁶¹

Jewish characters in Sweden 1920 – 1940

Before World War II, Jews were frequently portrayed in the comic press and Swedish films as greedy, calculating, unscrupulous and often stupid and while phonetics and accents were used to indicate that they were foreign-born⁶² during the 1930s they were also appointed specific gestures.⁶³ This chapter will show that after WWII, some demeaning portrayals of Jews have been placed upon the Arab man. As the Arab man takes on some of the cinematic Jewish characteristics from the 1920s, 30s and 40s, he will be referred to as the “New Jew”.

Rochelle Wright writes in her book *The Visible Wall: Jews and other ethnic outsiders in Swedish Film* (1998) that during the 1920s and 30s, the Jew was often a male designated outsider, portrayed through specific characters that would stand in

59 Brune, *Mörk magi i vita medier*, p.9

60 A connection between the Arab and Islam is discussed further on

61 “immigrants” in Swedish films are discussed further by Rochelle Wright, “‘Immigrant Film’ in Sweden at the Millenium” in Maria Larsson & Anders Marklund, *Swedish Film: An introduction and reader* and articles in *Svenska dagbladet*: Nordic Academic Press: Lund, 2010, pp.292-305, Timothy Tore Hebb, “Blattefejs stora hindret”, *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, 27 October 2003, “‘Det enda man kan och ska gå efter är sin hjärna och sitt hjärta. Mest hjärta’. Reza Parsa i samtal med Stig Björkman” in Stig Björkman et al. *Fucking Film*, Alfabeta Bokförlag: 2002, pp.122-3

62 Wright, *Visible Wall*, p.5

63 The “que sais je”-gesture that was appointed Jews has been described by Andersson, p.116, Gustafsson, 2007, p.252 and Wright *Visible Wall*, p.14

opposition to the Swedish.⁶⁴ The male designated outsider could be traced back to colonisation where, black were not only portrayed as a lower race but also a threat through sexual desires.⁶⁵ As mentioned by Wright, the black male was seen as more connected to nature and holding a stronger sexual desire, resulting in dominance over the white man, putting the white woman in danger.⁶⁶ Throughout history, films have portrayed white women that have to be saved from the black man who then has to be removed to restore narrative balance and order again. Plots have specifically targeted black men for this.

The theory of ‘the other’ relates closely to this. By portraying different ethnic minorities as ‘the other’, an audience is made to believe that these individuals have no feelings or thoughts of their own and are significantly different to the portrayed “white”.⁶⁷ As mentioned in chapter two, the meaning of the term the other refers to “one pole of the relationship between a [subject] and a person or thing defined or constituted as a non-self that is different or other”.⁶⁸ Since it only exists along with other subjectivities⁶⁹ it can be regarded as way of comparing subjects and pointing to what is different. As a symbol, ‘the other’ has commonly been used throughout history to win over an enemy and its land.⁷⁰ It exists only as a subject, in opposition to an oppressing object, epitomized through the relationship between the (white) master and the (black) slave.⁷¹ It can be used to refer to what a society see as different. In this chapter, the other is used in conjunction with whiteness to describe how the Arab has been made the other.

The Arab as the New Jew

Wright explains that in films from before the Second World War, ethnic markers such as

64 Wright, *Visible Wall*, p.12, 388

65 This could be traced to colonialism; Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, 4th edn, Blackwell: Cornwall, 2003

66 Wright, *Visible Wall*, p.20

67 See chapter two where I explain the concept of whiteness

68 *Dictionary of Critical Theory*, p. 285

69 *ibid*

70 Christophe Konkobo, “Dark Continent, Dark Stage: Body Performance in Colonial Theatre and Cinema”, *Journal of Black Studies*, November 18, 2008

71 *Dictionary of Critical Theory*, p.285

“dark, curly hair, hooked noses, extravagant gestures, or foreign accents” would virtually always be identified with Jewish characters.⁷² Adding to this they were also given obviously Jewish-sounding names which can be connected to the way obviously Italian-sounding names is recurrent in portrayals of Italians in both contemporary American and Swedish cinema.⁷³ In addition to these ethnic markers, Benshoff and Griffin point out that Jews in American cinema also have an aspect of religion.⁷⁴ I would like to specifically consider the religious aspect when discussing Muslims in Swedish films of today, because I have noted that at times, immigrants are pointed out as Muslims while there are hardly ever any pointers towards Christianity or other religions. Dilsa Demirbag-Sten, journalist and writer, bring some interesting points in her article on immigration in Sweden where she questions the integration politics in Sweden.⁷⁵ Demirbag-Sten writes that the view of immigrants as a collective group is most clear in politics. She explains further that Sweden has a system to help unemployed citizens finding a job and that this help differs if you appear in the Statistics Sweden’s, SCB’s, statistics over immigrants. She also points to the dialogue surrounding integration, which has increasingly come to deal with Muslims. She writes that no other group is tied to religion as much as Muslims “as if Islam were an ethnicity”.⁷⁶ Her point can be tied to the last decade of films in Sweden. Arabic Muslims in contemporary Swedish films can be found in *Jalla! Jalla!* (a Muslim wedding) and *Mind the Gap* (“what?! Are you Muslim?” - Yasmin’s white Swedish friend Elin’s reaction to the fact that Yasmin comes from an Arabic Muslim family). If the Arab man is the “New Jew” Islam is his religion in Swedish film.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the definition of an immigrant is “a person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country”⁷⁷ but in Swedish film there is usually no difference between an immigrant and a person who is born in Sweden to

72 Wright, *Visible Wall*, p.12

73 As seen in *Göta Kanal 2*, and *Göta Kanal 3*, Peter Bondanella, *Hollywood Italians: Dagoberto, Palookas, Romeos, Wise Guys, and Sopranos*, Continuum: New York, 2004, p.47

74 Benshoff & Griffin, p.68

75 Demirbag-Sten, D, “Som om islam vore en etnicitet”, translation by author

76 ibid

77 “immigrant”, *The Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3rd edn, 2010, Oxford University Press; Oxford Reference Online, retrieved 17 May 2012, < <http://www.oxfordreference.com> >

immigrant parents. If an actor looks non-European, they get the role as an immigrant, whether they are an immigrant or not (whether he has the experience to put himself into the character's position and play the immigrant, which it is fair to believe would be easier if you had first-hand experience of moving to a new country hence be the best suited for the job or not). Josef Fares, Fares Fares, Danilo Bejarano and others have commented on this phenomenon.⁷⁸ The "immigrant" is visible in films through the use of actors that have a specific look (dark, curly hair and crooked noses) and are speaking, or are given, an accent to enhance their otherness. Some of these actors are born in Sweden while others are born abroad but usually they have come to Sweden as children and then been raised in Sweden and consider themselves Swedish while they have parents that are born in foreign countries.

They play characters that are supposed to have different backgrounds than that of characters with parents and grandparents that are born in Sweden, the white. Ylva Brune writes on the subject of immigrants in Swedish news,⁷⁹ and how immigrants have been subjected to a lot of negative writings that in turn contributes to an unfair image or, as Hall would put it, an unfair *representation*⁸⁰ in Swedish media. According to Hall, it is of great importance to understand the process of representation where members of a culture use language to produce meaning.⁸¹ Representations are built on the fact that they can change and be redefined through human interaction. This way, meaning is created through culture from one period to another and through what is shown and what is not.⁸² Henceforth, if immigrants are portrayed in negative ways in media, while not producing media where the immigrant is portrayed in a positive way, the representation as a whole would be false.

Furthermore, if a filmmaker has a background different to that of a white-Swede, it is immediately pointed out. The term "immigrant director" was introduced in the film year of 2000. This year, three Swedish films were given extra attention by the Swedish media; *Jalla! Jalla!* (2000) by Josef Fares, *Vingar av Glas* (2000) by Reza Bagher, and

78 Redvall, 2000, Hebb, 2003, Tommy Gustafsson, „Ett steg på vägen mot en ny jämlikhet? Könrelationer och stereotyper i ung svensk ungdomsfilm på 2000-talet” in Erik Hedling, & AK. Wallengren, *Solskenslandet: Svensk film på 2000 talet*, Stockholm: Atlantis, 2006

79 Brune, *Mörk magi i vita medier*

80 Hall, p.61

81 *ibid.*

82 Hall, p.59

Före Stormen (2000) by Reza Parza. These films were made by “immigrant directors”⁸³ and dealt with issues of immigration, integration and identity. By creating a stir surrounding the fact that the filmmaker was an immigrant, the media also created the image of non-white filmmakers as different to white Swedish filmmakers.

Rochelle Wright writes that “immigrant directors” make an effort to change an existing stereotype of immigrants in Swedish film at the millennium.⁸⁴

Jalla! Jalla! (2000) and Farsan (2010)

Josef Fares deals with representation issues in his first film, the comedy *Jalla! Jalla!* which was a commercial success in Swedish cinemas. It was seen by more than 750 000 people in Sweden and has been aired on Swedish television several times.⁸⁵ The film was directed and written by Josef Fares and centres around the two friends Roro who has a Lebanese heritage and Måns who is a white Swede. The two men work together for the local council cleaning up parks and public areas, they shower together and share the same soap and toothpaste, but while they are portrayed as equals, it is clear that Roro has a different background to that of Måns.

For example, when Måns come to visit Roro’s parents he has a minor cultural shock as he tries out the Lebanese food that Roro’s grandmother has prepared and listens to Roro speaking Arabic. At one point Måns is taken to a Lebanese “voodoo-guy”. Furthermore, Roro’s father wants Roro to get married to a Lebanese girl (Yasmin) rather than his white Swedish girlfriend Lisa whom he is in love with. Måns cannot understand why Roro would marry a girl he does not love and there is no explanation for this cultural difference anywhere in the film other than that it is because the family wants many grandchildren or “it’s good to be married”. Adding to this, Yasmin’s family will send her back to Lebanon against her will unless she marries Roro. This shows that through a lack of explanation, non-whites are portrayed different, as others. Through Måns’s contact with the others’ culture, cultural differences are presented as something

83 Redvall, 2000, Wright ”Immigrant film’ p.292

84 Wright, ’Immigrant film’, p.292

85 Swedish Film Institute

of an outsider's culture, different to that of the (white) "Swedish" identity. Wright writes that in films from 1930s to 1950s, Jews and other ethnic outsiders in Sweden were given negative characteristics to "highlight the contrasting, positive traits of ethnic Swedes".⁸⁶ Roro's culture is somewhat ridiculed through Måns's contact with it, contrasting it with Måns's Swedish culture.

In two films by Josef Fares, "immigrants" are portrayed as greedy and involved in dubious business. In *Jalla! Jalla!*, Roro's father and Paul are both greedy although Paul is more extreme in his obsession with money and wealth. Roro's father works in a second-hand shop where he fools customers by using sales tricks and Paul brags about his new car, new camera, how much money he earns from his restaurant and that he can buy both a car and an apartment for Roro and Yasmin. In Josef Fares's fourth film *Farsan*, the two immigrant men working together in a bike shop are seen taking advantage of a desperate customer and fooling him for his money. They then split the money between them and put it in their pockets, rather than in the cash register. These four characters all got strong accents throughout the films in which they appear. Andersson's book on Jews in the Swedish comic press around 1900-1930 explains how Jews were often given strong accents that were ridiculed through phonetics.⁸⁷ In *Jalla! Jalla!* and *Farsan*, the non-white (Arab) men are all ridiculed for their broken Swedish and for often getting the sentence structure wrong.

It is clear that some of the of Jewish characters in Swedish film and society of the 1920s-1940s has not disappeared but rather made a comeback to be transferred to today's cinematic portrayal of the Arab. For this reason, the Arab will be referred to as the New Jew.

It might sound now, from my analysis so far, as if though *Jalla! Jalla!* is mostly portraying the New Jew in a demeaning, stereotyping way but by and large, *Jalla! Jalla!* avoids a demeaning stereotyping of the Arab, as Wright also points out.⁸⁸ Even though

⁸⁶ In films from 1930s to 1950s, Jews and other ethnic outsider in Sweden such as the Travellers were portrayed different to "highlight the contrasting, positive traits of ethnic Swedes", Wright, *Visible Wall*, p.394

⁸⁷ Andersson, p.92

⁸⁸ Wright, 'Immigrant film', p.302

Roro's father is seen as old-fashioned and non-understanding when it comes to Roro's love life, he does change his mind by the end of the film and accepts Lisa as the love of Roro, making Paul the ultimate villain of the film. Not all traits from the earlier depicted Jew have been given to the Arabic man. For example, the Jew in earlier Swedish film was always depicted as separated from his family,⁸⁹ yet in *Jalla! Jalla!* The family is very much present. In *Farsan*, the family is not present since Aziz (the main character) has lost his wife but there is still a strong focus on Aziz and his desires for his son having a big family. Therefore this cannot be seen as a similarity between the cinematic depiction of Jews of the 1920s and 30s and today's Arab.

In her conclusion, Tigervall writes that as a whole, the immigrant in Swedish film is becoming more integrated in the Swedish society.⁹⁰ Roro is no criminal and no sexual predator, and his Swedish girlfriend's father accepts him and his relationship to her. Tigervall also points out that this is solely due to the fact that he comes as an individual separated from his group.⁹¹ Roro's father, though slightly integrated, will always be one with another culture than that of the Swedish and the same goes for Aziz in *Farsan* so it can be argued that this only relates to a younger generation of immigrants and the older is still stuck in his old, traditional East.

Swedish filmmakers are not consciously portraying Arabs in a demeaning way; however, according to Ylva Habel there seem to be great difficulties in Sweden to depict non-Europeans with multiple identities (non-whites such as Italian-Swedes, Iranian-Swedes etc.) with a psychological depth.⁹² For her, the groups who decide and distribute filmic means need to "be subjected to some sort of »affirmative action«", "and stop to "promote ideas that fantasize about 'multiculturalism'".⁹³ She clarifies that for as long as Swedish film producers represent multiculturalism is something new, colourful and exciting in Sweden, non-whites will continue to be exoticized.⁹⁴

89 Wright, *Visible Wall*, p.68

90 Tigervall, *Folkhemsk film*, p.313

91 Tigervall, *Folkhemsk film*, p.68

92 "Nyfiken vit"

93 *ibid*, "de grupper som beslutar om och fördelar filmmedel underkastar någon typ av »affirmative action«", "Ett av flera viktiga steg i den riktningen är att sluta gynna filmidéer som fantiserar om »mångkultur«", translation by author

94 *ibid*

4. Film and society

As Ylva Habel points to an apparent difficulty in portraying non-white Swedes in films today, it is of interest to understand where this difficulty derives from. As this chapter will show, parts of society are reflected through film and although no answer is given to the question “does film influence society” it is important to be aware of factors operational in this powerful medium. Such factors can be racism, stereotyping and prejudice.

Sweden is a country where people of many nationalities, ethnic and cultural backgrounds live. The lack of non-white Swedes represented in contemporary Swedish films results in an invisibility of this group on screen. Is this invisibility a reflection of society? Through the previous chapters it has been revealed that non-white Swedes are excluded from the cinematic Swedish society or portrayed in static, stereotypical ways. This chapter aims to find out whether this Swede is also excluded from the real society, outside the reel. Examples are given of films that portray a real society or parts of it, and film’s impact on society is discussed through the media effects debate.

Society’s impact on film

In western modernity, empirical experience is the basis of knowledge.⁹⁵ Experience is knowledge. In the Oxford Dictionary, the verb experience means to “encounter or undergo (an event or occurrence)” and to “feel (an emotion or sensation)”.⁹⁶ Many viewers have experienced cinema. It is possible to encounter cinema; through viewers’ ability to feel emotional during a film they can experience cinema. A kind of knowledge is attained from these experiences that could involve people the viewer does not have practical experience (encounters) of. As bell hooks writes in her *Reel to Real: Race, Sex and Class at the Movies*, cinema provides an opportunity for everyone to “look at

95 Susan Buck-Morse, “Visual Studies and Global Imagination” in *Papers of Surrealism*, Issue 2, summer 2004

96 “experience”, *The Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3rd edn, 2010, Oxford University Press; Oxford Reference Online, retrieved 17 May 2012, < <http://www.oxfordreference.com> >

difference and the different without having to experientially engage ‘the other’”.⁹⁷

It is possible to experience “the other” through films. According to Julian Petley, in the media effects debate the “other” is usually the working class, the “redundant population”, the “social problem group” or “the dangerous classes”,⁹⁸ and as pointed out through previous chapters, this other in Swedish films is that of non-white Swedes.

Many commentators have pointed out that at times, films portray the political climate.⁹⁹ The cinematic portrayal of Arabs was influenced by the Iranian revolution in the 1980s, by Saddam Hussein in the 1990s and by Bin Laden in the 2000s. After 9/11, film producers were called up to make patriotic films¹⁰⁰ and turbulence in the US was reproduced in Hollywood films of the 2000s.¹⁰¹ Kellner writes that “[film] can display social realities of the time in documentary and realist fashion, directly representing the event and phenomena of an epoch.”¹⁰²

Stephen Prince gives more examples of a society reflected in cinema and states that during the American 1980's, terrorism was used to attract audiences with its violence, action and explosions and that this was due to the fact that the American society had taken part in wars during this period and came to be a target for terror attacks.¹⁰³ *Nighthawks* (Bruce Malmuth, 1981) and *Collateral Damage* (Andrew Davis, 2002) both show how explosions and a lack of human emotion portray terrorism in the action world.

Prince considers popular culture responsive to social and political agenda¹⁰⁴ and that the Abu Ghraib photos and the reports coming from Guantanamo Bay prison influenced the *Saw*-films, which placed torture on the public agenda.¹⁰⁵ Williams and Cook connect films with the political climate of the late 1960s, and argue that cinema

97 hooks, *reel to real*, p.2

98 Julian Petley, “Us and Them” in Martin Barker and Julian Petley’s *Ill Effects: The Media/Violence Debate*, Routledge: New York, 2007, p.170

99 See for example Kellner, *Cinema Wars* and Stephen Prince, *S. Firestorm*, New York: Colombia University Press, 2009

100 “Hollywood Considers Role in War Effort”, CNN, 12 November, 2001, retrieved 15 December 2010, <www.archives.cnn.com/2001/us/11/11/rec.hollywood.terror/index.html>

101 See Kellner, *Cinema Wars*

102 Kellner, *Cinema Wars*, p.14

103 Prince, *Firestorm*, p.35

104 Prince, *Firestorm*, p.179-94

105 Prince, *Firestorm*, p. 286

can be a way for society to make sense of violence in reality.¹⁰⁶ According to Crowther and Gold, violence on screen creates an accepted idea of resolving problems with violence as the only solution and that violence occurring in the world is not an acceptable defence for showing it on screen.¹⁰⁷ Nonetheless it *is* an acceptable reason to portray violence because, as Prince states, cinema makes sense of deaths, which is also craved for by the viewer.¹⁰⁸

Through the examples above, it is evident that society affects the cinematic medium and what is portrayed through it. It seems particularly politics and violence from the real society can be traced to the cinematic portrayals of the same. Connecting Prince's argument of a cinema making sense of what is seen in a physical society; can this be applied to representations, such as a cinema representing non-white Swedes in a negative way? Perhaps this depiction is a kind of release of anxieties that are present in other parts of society.

The need for awareness

Teun Van Dijk writes on the discourse of manipulation in his article "Discourse and Manipulation", published in *Discourse and Society* (2006). For him, manipulation is only possible when the receivers are passive victims of manipulation. This stands in contrast to receivers of persuasion who become "interlocutors (...) free to believe or act as they please, depending on whether or not they accept the arguments of the persuader".¹⁰⁹ Van Dijk continues to explain manipulation as domination, a kind of "abuse of power" that might be implemented through the use of mass media where the recipients are unable to comprehend the true purposes of beliefs or deeds argued for by

106 Tony Williams, "The Dirty Dozen: The Contradictory Nature of Screen Violence" in Y Tasker, *Action and Adventure Cinema*, New York: Routledge, 2004, p.346, David A Cook, "Ballistic Balletics: Styles of Violent Representation in The Wild Bunch and after", in S Prince, *Sam Peckinpah's: The Wild Bunch*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p.131,151

107 Bosley Crowther, "Another Smash at Violence" in S Prince, *Screening Violence*, London: The Athlone Press, 2000, pp.54, Ronald Gold, "Crowther's 'Bonnie' – Brook: Rap at Violence Stirs Brouhaha" in S Prince, *Screening Violence*, The Athlone Press: London, 2000 pp.58

108 Prince, *Screening Violence*, p.115, 55

109 Teun A Van Dijk, "Discourse and Manipulation" in *Discourse and Society*, Sage: London, 2006, p.361

the manipulator.¹¹⁰ He also points to the vague boundary between “(illegitimate) manipulation and (legitimate) persuasion”, and concludes in his criteria for manipulation that people are consciously manipulated by a manipulator that has the best interests only of their self.¹¹¹

Swedish viewers are not by any means manipulated by the narratives on screen. However, if they are unable to see the full consequences or actions advocated by the lack of portrayals of non-white Swedes, there is a negative consequence: a part of the Swedish population singled out into a negatively exposed group. Viewers need to be aware of representations in contemporary Swedish cinema and how these representations differentiate between white and non-white groups in society. Through this awareness viewers are more likely to question and criticise this representation. Kellner argues, “[For] diagnostic critique, film is an important source of knowledge, if used judiciously with the tools of history, social theory, and a critical media/cultural studies.”¹¹² What Kellner denotes is the importance of an awareness of the representations and how, without this awareness, film cannot have an important meaning.

To come back to Van Dijk, manipulation is “an illegitimate social practice because it violates general social rules or norms.”¹¹³ As discussed in chapter 2 on whiteness, white Swedes are portrayed through many different characters and psychological depth while non-white Swedes are not. Therefore one could argue that portrayals of non-white Swedes are beneficial for the majority of white Swedes, and that this violates general social rules (racism and prejudice).

Van Dijk’s explains what society defines as illegitimate: “all forms of interaction, communication or other social practices that are only in the interests of one party, and against the best interests of the recipients.”¹¹⁴ If that “one party” is the white Swede’s, the non-white Swede is the recipient losing out. The portrayals of white and non-white Swedes could be considered to be in the sole interests of white Swedes since the static

110 *ibid*

111 *ibid*

112 Kellner, *Cinema Wars*, p.35

113 Van Dijk, “Discourse and Manipulation”, p.363

114 *ibid*

and demeaning of non-whites in contemporary Swedish cinema are a disadvantage to them. It can never be positive that a large (or small) group of people is constantly subjected to stereotyping. However, to argue this point further, films must have an effect on their audience.

Van Dijk continues: “*manipulation is illegitimate in a democratic society, because it (re)produces, or may reproduce, inequality*: it is in the best interests of powerful groups and speakers, and hurts the interests of less powerful groups and speakers. This means that the definition is not based on the intentions of the manipulators, or on the more or less conscious awareness of manipulation by the recipients, but in terms of its societal consequences (...). For each communicative event, it then needs to be spelled out how such respective interests are managed by manipulative discourse.”¹¹⁵ Through this argument, it becomes clear that the need for awareness is always urgent, as Kellner has already pointed out. Each communicator needs to provide full and complete information about their subjects. The cinematic portrayals of non-white Swedes do not do that. Again, to argue this point further, films must have an effect on their audience.

Non-whites in Sweden

As shown, society makes an impact on film. Can the way non-white Swedes have been portrayed in the Swedish cinemas then denote an exclusion of non-white Swedes from society? As it has already been argued, non-white Swedes are treated differently in Swedish society.

Brune point to several articles where refugees are portrayed as a “mass”, a “collective” that she says transforms them to “influx, number, cost, invasion and threat”.

¹¹⁶ Van Dijk asserts that this perspective of refugees was introduced in the Swedish media as refugees from the Middle East began to arrive to Western Europe.¹¹⁷

115 Van Dijk, “Discourse and Manipulation”, p.363-4

116 Brune, *Mörk magi i vita medier*, p.37

117 Teun A Van Dijk, *Racism and the Press. Critical Studies in Racism and Migration*, Routledge: London, 1991 cited in Y Brune, *Mörk magi i vita medier: Svensk nyhetsjournalistik om invandrare, flyktingar och rasism*, Carlssons: Stockholm, 2001, p.37

Additionally, when the serial shooter in Malmö was discussed in media, he was immediately compared to “Lasermannen” who aimed his killing rage at immigrants, while in fact the serial shootings in Malmö mostly affected non-white Swedes born in Sweden¹¹⁸ and in a Swedish radio programme called *Vetandets Värld*, Asia researcher Tobias Hübinette points out that while the eastern Asian man has been given the role of a weak “no-man”, the western Asian man is portrayed as dangerous, violent and oppressive.¹¹⁹

Here, Hübinette touches upon an interesting point: that of the images of the Arab man as changing alongside the political situation. He calls attention to the fact that in the 1900s, the Arab changed from being a romantic, fantastic, erotic Arab to become an aggressive man with a beard, as a direct consequence of politics (Israel). Perhaps this connection between the “threatening” Arab in news and media could explain some of the negative portrayals of the Arab in Swedish film.

As a black person in Sweden, Ylva Habel writes that her skin colour excludes her from the Swedish society, her identity as a Swede is constantly questioned and that Swedish society lacks whiteness studies and is afraid of the race discussion.¹²⁰ Habel describes the difficulty of getting a job other than that of a cleaner, how she is pointed out for her skin colour in schools, night clubs and cultural events.¹²¹

Not only black people experience an exclusion from Swedish society, as mentioned in “The New Jew”, many writers, debaters, actors have pointed this out. Christian Catomeris’s writes on the exclusion of “non-ethnic Swedes” in the editorial offices in Sweden.¹²² In an article in the film magazine *FLM*, Ylva Habel, Mani Maserrat-Agah, Hynek Pallas and Hassan Loo Sattarvandi discuss images of ethnicity and skin colour in Swedish film.¹²³ All four point to a necessary change of the Swedish

118 ”Lasermansrapportering på skakig grund”, 2012

119 ”Bilderna av den asiatiska mannen”

120 Habel, “Whiteness Swedish Style”, “Nyfiken vit”

121 Habel, “Whiteness Swedish Style”, pp. 90-119

¹²² Christian Catomeris, “Som att förflytta sig tjugo år tillbaka i tiden: Om etnisk ’enfold’ på redaktionerna”, in Y Brune, *Mörk magi i vita medier: svensk nyhetsjournalistik om invandrare, flyktingar och rasism*, Carlssons: Stockholm, 2001, pp. 15-28

123 “Nyfiken vit”

film industry as mainly white and several mentions the difficulties of getting a job and being accepted in the Swedish society.

As pointed out in chapter two, a kind of hierarchy can be found within whiteness. It has been found that within immigrant groups, there also exists a similar hierarchy.

Immigrants from Asia and Africa “have a lower employment rate irrespective of how long they have been in Sweden and regardless of gender, education, age and marital status”.¹²⁴ They seem to be excluded not only on screen, but also in society.

The Head of the Youth Division at the Malmö Police, Glen Sjögren says in a recent article that a common picture of the perpetrator and victim has been that of an offender with a foreign background and victim of “ethnic Swedish background” but that this is not true and that this picture is also starting to change.¹²⁵ In the same article Criminology expert Jerzy Sarnecki connects the offences with class differences in Sweden. He says that criminality is a way of working around an exclusion from the society.¹²⁶

Research has shown that while immigration politics places immigrants in specific areas such as Rosengård in Malmö, (white) immigrants from western-European countries move to other areas when they find a higher-paid job, while (non-white) immigrants from other parts of Europe and non-European immigrants that also find higher-paid jobs, are more reluctant to move away from these same areas.¹²⁷ Due to a lack of integration, non-white immigrants are excluded from Swedish society.

Film's impact on society

Popular film is often perceived as a reflection of a current or historical political climate, an event, phenomena or an epoch.¹²⁸ As a medium, it can recreate a recognisable world

124 Göransson, p.29, “[Asiater och afrikaner] har lägre sysselsättningsgrad oavsett hur länge de varit i Sverige och oavsett kön, utbildning, ålder och civilstånd”, translation by author

125 Andreas Lovén, “Rånen en klassfråga” in *Skånska Dagbladet*, 15 February 2012, “etnisk svensk bakgrund”, translation by author

126 Lovén, “Rånen en klassfråga”

127 de los Reyes et. al, p.296-7

128 Kellner, *Cinema Wars*, p.4, 14

realistically. According to Kellner, film can also produce symbolic representations that interpret, comment on and indirectly portray aspects of an era.¹²⁹ Some films might transcend the social context through their artistic vision, portraying future possibilities and offering “insight into the human beings, social relations, institutions, on-going conflicts of a given era, or the human condition itself”.¹³⁰ If used with good judgement together with the tools of social theory, history and critical cultural studies, one finds that film is an important source of knowledge. One of Kellner's examples is TV-series “West Wing” that portrayed a Latino president with startling similarities to the black president candidate Obama.

Films’ impact on society is discussed through the “media effects debate”. The debate has its origin in a mass society theory where industrialisation and urbanisation resulted in a destruction of communities.¹³¹ There was a strong belief that mass media overpowered the audience, which was strengthened with the emergence of motion pictures and radio broadcasting.¹³² In 1969 George Gerbner developed a social theory referred to as the Cultivation Theory which “claims that media mold society and shape how people view the world by presenting consistent and compelling versions of social reality”.¹³³ Here, depending on their exposure, entire groups are affected by the contents of mass media.¹³⁴

In an article regarding the effects of gender stereotyping in mass media, Patricia Oppliger found women underrepresented as characters in television shows from the 1950s to the 1970s,¹³⁵ and when they did appear, it was in symbolic or stereotypical roles. Oppliger also found that while women appeared more frequently and in more diverse roles in the 1980s, this was a distorted view of society, since women did not appear in society with the same frequency as they did on screen. Oppliger argues that stability and consistency “create reinforcement of the ideas being presented” since most

129 Kellner, *Cinema Wars*, p.14

130 Kellner, *Cinema Wars*, p.14

131 Tae-Seop Lim & Sang Yeon Kim “Many Faces of Media Effects” in R Preiss et al. *Mass Media Effects Research: Advances Through Meta-Analysis*, 2nd edn, Routledge: New York,,2010, p.315

132 Lim & Kim, *Many Faces*, p.315

133 Lim & Kim *Many Faces*, p.319

134 James Potter, “Cultivation Theory and Research: A conceptual critique”, *Human Communication Research*, Vol. 19, Issue 4, June 1993

135 Patricia A. Oppliger “Effects of Gender Stereotyping on Socialization” in *Mass Media Effects Research: Advances Through Meta-Analysis*, 2nd edn, Routledge: New York,,2010, p.199

Americans spend a considerable amount of time watching television, rather than socialising.¹³⁶ On sex-role development, she writes that children value certain behaviours higher if they are presented with “models [that are] rewarded for such behaviour”.¹³⁷

The media effects debate regards media portrayals’ effect on audiences’ cognitive and emotional orientations in the world. I believe in an active audience that “selectively [expose] themselves to media content and [interpret] that content in ways situated to their unique needs”.¹³⁸ Audiences today have access to ample amounts of information and can be critical to sources. Gerbner’s and Oppliger’s points on consistency and stability as reinforcements of ideas (representations) could be transferred onto Swedish society and media. It could then be argued that instead of the amount of time spent watching films, the amount of films portraying a static representation could act the same way; reinforcing ideas.

For Pallas, the amount of white bodies on screen (through the supporting roles, extras etc.) contribute to a general idea of the national Swedish as white.¹³⁹ Here, the represented white is placed on Swedishness through the stability and consistency that Gerbner and Oppliger write is reinforcing ideas.

136 Oppliger, *Effects of Gender Sterotyping*, p.200

137 Oppliger, *Effects of Gender Stereotyping*, p.201

138 Robin I. Nabi ”And Miles to Go...: Reflecting on The Past and Future of Mass Media Research” in R Preiss et al. *Mass Media Effects Research: Advances Through Meta-Analysis*, 2nd edn, Routledge: New York, 2010, p.137

139 Pallas, *Vithet*, p.157-8

4. Conclusion

As Dyer, Pallas and Habel all point out; whiteness is a socially constituted category that needs to be discussed in order to dislodge it from its centrality and authority. That is what this paper has aimed to do. Throughout, it has been clarified that through exclusion in contemporary mainstream Swedish cinema, non-white Swedes become invisible. While this invisibility cannot be traced back to society, where non-white Swedes live alongside white Swedes, the manner in which non-whites are presented (“they are different from white Swedes”) seems to derive from a society where non-whites have difficulties getting a job or receives different treatment from the state.

Perhaps the depictions of Arabs, Italians or Greeks in films are a way of explaining these difficulties, just like violence in film makes sense of a violent society. In that case, the negative portrayals create a reason for employers not to hire non-whites. They are consciously or unconsciously racist. Instead of blaming the difficulties on a racist or white society, where non-whites are ranked lower on the whiteness scale and portraying class differences and consequences of social exclusion, cinematic portrayals have contributed to an image of non-whites as inherently or culturally different.

Whiteness is reinforced as Swedish through a consistent portrait of a Swedish society inhabited by white Swedes. Additionally, whites are rewarded for senseless behaviour while non-whites are not. Whites benefit from images on screen since they are given the benefit of complex characters, more truthful to reality. The knowledge from experiencing a film could confuse viewers that do not posit a critical thinking regarding these stereotyping portrayals. Since the race debate is not discussed much in the media or the political agenda, the invisibility or stereotyping portrayals of non-whites could contribute to an idea that non-whites are different.

To continue to point out whiteness in all aspects of Swedish society seems necessary. This would create not only a just portrayal but also a more realistic one of people who are (or should be) included in Sweden. Sweden is not a white society, neither is the non-white Swede a money hungry sexual predator or criminal. The discussion regarding skin colour is not aiming at pointing groups or people out as different but rather to expose the

underlying structures that Swedish society is built on. An all-inclusive approach needs to be taken into action because Sweden benefits economically and socially from including all Swedes, white or non-white. All members of society, not only film- or opinion makers need to be aware of portrayals on screen and how they contribute to an unfair representation of Swedes.

All aspects in society should be scrutinized and one could for example start looking at how whiteness is represented in advertising, television, educational systems etc. Not only is it important to regard race in academic institutions but through popular culture and entertainment. The invisibility of some groups in society needs attention since the invisibility disconnects them from society. An exclusion from society, as Sarnecki points out, forces people to find inclusion elsewhere. Since cinema has great potential for reaching a large audience and anticipate social changes, what better place to start than to change the way Swedish society and Swedes are depicted on screen.

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