THE GAPS OF THE "LINGUISTIC TURN"

SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON THE NEXUS OF REPRESENTATIONS, THE SURPLUS AND THE MATERIAL

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ABSTRACT

The move to the linguistic has provided significant advantages for feminist scholars, in showing how differences (for example, in regard to sex, class and race) are indebted to discursive productions rather than to material "facts". However, there are some key issues or areas in which the linguistic turn needs to be further theorized. In order to problematize the linguistic turn this position paper opens up new fields of research. The aim is to display three gaps – areas to be developed – within the feminist linguistic stands: 1) the concept of material; 2) the concept of surplus; and 3) the existence of representations and their place, meaning and potential within current feminist studies.

INTRODUCTION: THE FAILURES OF THE LINGUISTIC TURN

This article aims to theoretically discuss what might be called the linguistic stands of feminist studies by addressing some of its current gaps. If we accept that different feminist movements are engaged in one of the significant struggles of our age, we must have the proper tools; that is, a relevant conceptual framework of contemporary critical social theory in order to illuminate women's subordination. Given this requirement, it becomes crucial to investigate what kind of conceptions, or theoretical means, will allow us to fully understand male dominance(s), female subordination(s) as well as the resistance against the very same (Allen 1998: 457). This article, therefore, departs from the idea that in order to resist power-relations between men and women we must continue to ask questions about how and why such power-relations occur. Moreover, we must develop innovative theories for the study of gendered power and the resistance against this power.

The turn to the linguistic and discursive has been enormously productive for different feminisms. It has allowed feminist scholars to explore a number of issues from several dimensions: complex analyses departing from the interconnection of power, knowledge,

subjectivity and language, as well as intersectional dimensions; how gender has been articulated with other volatile markings (such as class, race, and sexuality). In particular, it has allowed feminists to understand gender from new perspectives. Among others things, discourse theory is closely bound up with the concept of performativity, which has been (re)introduced to the agenda by Judith Butler (Butler 1990, 1999; see also Rosenberg 2005: 15). In short Butler argues (inspired by Derrida's theory of iterability or citationality) that gender is constituted in time through the repetition of acts (Butler 1990, 1999: 178–179). In this, Butler has created a paradigm shift within the history of feminist studies. Indeed, many have convincingly argued that Butler's understanding of performativity has become the "baseline" from which subsequent feminist inquiry on gender discourses must proceed (for example, Zalewski in Parpart & Zalewski 2008).

This focus, however, has been critically discussed by the followers of the new "material turn" who, as a point of departure, take what they experience as the advantages – but primarily the failures – of the linguistic turn: "Far from deconstructing the dichotomies of language/reality or culture/nature, they have rejected one side and embraced the other" (Alaimo & Hekman 2008: 2). Even though many poststructuralist theories grant the existence of a material reality, it is argued that this reality is often thought of as a realm entirely separate from that of language and discourse (Alaimo & Hekman 2008: 3; Guyer 1998). The discussion regarding material and symbolic forces has therefore entered the agenda as more-and-more feminist researchers acknowledge the material critique. Articles that have been named, for example *The Longing for the Material* (Ball 2006) or books such as *The Material Theory* (Alaimo & Hekman 2008), are popping up with increasing regularity when searching for the latest literature within feminist studies.

Overall, the move to the linguistic has provided significant advantages for the research on feminist resistance. However, there are some key issues or areas in which the linguistic turn needs to be further theorized. To problematize these matters I am presenting this position paper to open up for research of the following: 1) the question of "representations"; 2) the existence of a "surplus"; and 3) the question of "materiality" (in relation to surpluses and representations). Any argumentation within these areas must embrace the nexus of these core issues. Or, in other words, we need to display how these three "gaps" are related and interacting aspects, not at least when we study different practices of resistance.

The article will proceed as follows: in the first section, there will be a short detour on the "linguistic turn" in order to provide the readers with the theoretical context. Secondly, some

aspects of the "material turn" will be outlined to provide the readers with a background for the forthcoming analysis. As we will see the female body becomes a key issue within feminist theory when discussing the entanglements of discourses and materiality. For example, one of the main arguments of the "material turn" is that speeches, intimacy, proximity, moving, caring voices or foot movements, exceed the capacity of the linguistic theoretical stance. In other words, we must not forget how the "materialities of bodies, structures, landscapes, resources, etc., tend to disappear or take a back seat to practices of representation" (Ferguson 2007). Similarly, Braidotti (2002) argues that certain aspects of the identification process, such as proximity and interconnection, are impossible to render within language. By considering "a field of intersecting material and symbolic forces" (2002: 118), she is calling our attention to both the discursive and the material. Thus, while acknowledging the linguistic stands, it is argued that we must develop its main points so that it can continue to be a fruitful method of analysis throughout the near future. The material and linguistic turn are not thought of as a dichotomy, but instead it is argued that the linguistic turn ought to be developed and enhanced by bringing in the material. Or in other words, since the existing materiality affects the discourse, to explore the materiality contributes to our understanding of different discursive productions; including different entanglements of power and resistance.

Thirdly, the concept of a "surplus" will be outlined in order to show how it creates a gap within recent linguistic feminist theory. There is always a gap between the meaning (the descriptive features) assigned to a name and the object named. Or in other words, no women correspond entirely to the meanings associated with the name "woman". Indeed, there is never a perfect match that produces the effect of a non-symbolizable surplus (Edkins 1999: 99). But what this surplus means and what role it plays in the production of subject positions, and the subversive resistance against these, is not visible within feminist studies today. As this analysis will show, there are different "kinds" of surplus. This will be developed and clarified below.

In the fourth and last section, the question of representations will be considered. A discourse consists of a variety, or a body, of different representations that circulate and create meaning regarding the very same topic. Still, today, the kind of impact that different representations have in regard to what is called "meaning-making" is not clear within social science (cf. Fierke 2005). It is also not clear how different kinds of representations (for example, spoken or written) together support each other in order to create meaning. Thus, the concept of representation is broad, sliding and complex, and in some senses shrouds the research within the linguistic turn in fog. While a manifold of books and articles address various gendered

representations (Hall 1997b; Owen *et al*. 2007; Shifrin 2008) the complexity and manifoldness that characterizes the concept of representation has been strangely under theorized. With the exception of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who has questioned the overly broad meaning of the concept of representation from a post-colonial perspective (Spivak 1999), there are few researchers who have problematized the concept in general and particularly in relation to the material.

This article then builds upon the interpretation and development of different feminist debates. The idea is to bring together – and synthesize – various notions and arguments from different sources in order to provide a bigger picture. Put differently, this article will recognize, acknowledge and is based upon previous research; but through the combining of previous results the analysis aims at providing us with new insights (Jarrick 2003). In doing this I will go into dialogue with, among others, the work of Judith Butler (1990, 1999), Karen Barad (2008), Jenny Edkins (1999), Susan Hekman (2008), Tiina Rosenberg (2005), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1999), Rosi Braidotti (2003) and Kathy Ferguson (1993).

THE LINGUISTIC TURN

The linguistic turn embraces a postmodern variant, as well as one more extreme direction within a larger poststructuralist tradition, which both argue that the real is entirely constituted by language. In this article the linguistic turn will thus be used to address the bunch of research that tends to overlook the real and existence of a world "out there" while emphasizing how objects gain meaning and become objects of knowledge within discourse. Put differently, the linguistic turn argues that what we call the "real" is a product of language and its reality only exists in language. Thus the advocates of this direction have "turned to the discursive pole as the exclusive source of the constitution of nature, society, and reality" (Alaimo & Hekman 2008: 2).

The concept of discourse has been promoted by Foucault, as well as by other twentieth-century philosophers and it remains at the heart of the discussions among many poststructuralist researchers today. A discourse consists of a variety, or a body, of different representations (images, statements, sounds, photographs, etc.) that circulate and create meaning regarding the very same topic. Foucault calls these statements that work together a "discursive formation" as they: "refer to the same object, share the same style and support 'a strategy … a common institutional … or political drift or pattern'" (Cousins & Hussain in Hall 1992: 44; Foucault 1991; Hall 1997a; Lilja 2008). The concept provides us with an understanding of the production

of "shared meanings", which makes people who belong to the same society interpret the world in roughly the same way, and express themselves, their feelings and thoughts, in ways that will be understood by the others. Still, there are many meanings concerning a topic and more than one way of interpreting or representing it (Hall 1997a; Lilja 2008).

Contrary to what is sometimes implied, the followers of the linguistic turn do not deny the existence of a world "out there"; but what they argue is that "nothing has any meaning outside of discourses" (Foucault according to Hall 1997a: 44–45). It is within discourses that objects gain meaning and become objects of knowledge; since all that we can say about the "natural" world is constructed by humans, it is not possible to separate or establish a distinction between a "real" object and its meaning. Or in other words, natural "facts" are also discursive "facts" (Butler 1993; Laclau & Mouffe in Hall 1997a: 70–71). As Gayatri Spivak argues, we only know the world organized as a language, and "[we] operate with no other consciousness but one structured as language" (Spivak quoted by Ferguson, 1993: 124). Many linguistic feminists, then, argue that the power ascribed to language resides not only in what is said, or who gets to talk, but also in what is sayable at all (Ferguson 1993: 124).

Current theorizing on discursive productions goes hand-in-hand with Butler's outline of performativity (Rosenberg 2005: 15). For Butler, performativity serves as the site for possible contestation of "normalities" such as hegemonic and subordinated masculinities and femininities. According to Butler it is precisely the fact that gender is repeated, performed and thereby maintained that opens up the possibility of change. If discourses of gender are maintained through repetitions of behavior and modes of self-representation, these repetitions can be the locus of change and every interval of repetition offers a place to locate and investigate change. This repetitive and in some sense forced "doing" of gender, in Butler's outline, produces the *fiction* that an individual has a stable "gender", which they are just "expressing" in their actions (Butler 1990, 1999: 178–179). Butler is part of the field of queer research that is currently progressing rapidly (for example, Ambjörnsson 2007).

Researchers, who depart from the concept of discourse, often propose strong connections between discourses and the construction of different positions of identity. Discourses, it is argued, offer positions (provide images of identity or "subject positions"), which humans take up and invest in. Media, advertising, film, etc., are different platforms that provide us with information – telling us how it feels to occupy a particular subject position; for example, how does it feel being the street-wise teenager, the upwardly mobile worker or the caring parent? (Woodward 1997: 14). According to Stuart Hall, identification is the process of articulation; a suturing to a subject

position (but there is never a total match between the articulation and the position) (Hall 1996: 3). Identities are then, as Hall (1996: 6) indicates: "points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us". It is a combination of the hailing of the subject into a certain position and the subject investing in the position.

The identification process is formed by multiple mechanisms. For instance, one aspect of the identification process is that individuals long to fit in order to "make sense". Or in the words of Edkins and Pin-Fat: "The subject seeks a place in the social, a place that will confirm its existence as subject. It does this by asking what the social order wants of it, what is required" (Edkins & Pin-Fat 1999: 4–5, Lilja 2008). Therefore, the question of desire boils down to one simple question "what do others want from me?", rather than "what do I want?"

In sum, the linguistic fraction of feminist studies leans heavily upon the concepts of discourse and performativity. One major ontological difference between a poststructuralist, linguistic approach and the one of the "new materialism" is then about the construction of the discourse and how it is constituted. While the advocates of the linguistic turn tend to disconnect the construction of the discourse from any material facts, the "material turn" argues that the material plays an important role for how the discourse is constructed. However, as we shall see below, what might be considered as different shortcomings of the linguistic turn, might be developed and the theoretical "gaps" can be filled by adding different concepts to its argumentation. The forthcoming sections will discuss how the linguistic turn might be developed by adding the concepts of materiality, surplus and representation.

THE "MATERIAL TURN": ENTANGLING THE MATERIAL AND GENDERED DISCOURSES

Before discussing the concepts of a surplus and of representations, some of the arguments of the "new" material feminism will be outlined. One critique of the linguistic turn takes the body as a starting point and it emphasizes gender as a "lived social relation" (McNay 2004), women as "embodied selves" (Malmström 2009) or it argues for the body as an "interface, a threshold, a field of intersecting material and symbolic forces, it is a surface where multiple codes (race, sex, class, age, etc.) are inscribed; it is a cultural construction that capitalizes on the energies of a heterogeneous, discontinuous and unconscious nature" (Braidotti 2003: 44). Women, it is argued, have bodies that feel pain and pleasure; bodily experiences, which in turn interact with prevailing discourses. We have diseases that are subject to medical interventions that may or may not cure

bodies (Alaimo & Hekman 2008). In addition, as argued by Bacchi and Beasley (2000) feminist literature on citizenship – for example in discussions of participation – increasingly offers a critique of the model of the disembodied (supposedly universal) citizen as exclusionary and advocates taking bodies seriously. Thus, current theories that have sprung up from the linguistic turn must be developed to explain the above mentioned material events and the body as a central node for feminist research.

How far we must go and to what extent we must "see" the material differs among researchers. However, there seems to be a common view that exploring the existence of a materiality can actually contribute to our understanding of the discursive production, since various aspects of materiality contribute to the development and transformation of discourses (Colebrook 2000; Grosz 1994). The point of departure is that we must not abandon what we have learnt from the linguistic turn, but indeed acknowledge its advantages and "build on" rather than "re-start" it. The aim is then to develop theories in which the material is more than a passive social construction, but instead stands out as an agentic force that interacts with and changes discourse (Alaimo & Hekman 2008: 4–7).

The new "material turn" is in some senses dominated by Karen Barad, who promotes a posthumanist concept of performativity that "incorporates important material and discursive, social and scientific, human and nonhuman, and natural and cultural factors" (Barad 2008: 126). Barad introduces the concept of "agential realism", in which the core point is that theory has the ability of making certain aspects of reality agentic and that this agency, in turn, has real, material and political consequences (Barad 2008: 120–147; Hekman 2008: 105). Linguistic feminists do not say that the world out there does not exist, but that we can hardly see it "as-it-is" without interpreting it through layers of meaning. As a response Barad argues that the nature/material prevails within poststructuralism as a passive being that is defined in relation to culture–active. It is argued that nature also affects the discourses and has political consequences. The question is then how to conceptualize nature so that it is assigned agency. One follower of this viewpoint is Susan Hekman (2008) who argues the following:

> The significance of Barad's position and its advantages in relation to those of Butler and Foucault are revealed in a pathbreaking article published in differences in 1998. Barad's article supplies an illustration of how agential realism works in both theory and practice. At the core of agential realism is the thesis that theories make particular

> aspects of reality agentic and that this agency has real, material – and, most notably – consequences (2008:105).

What Hekman asks for is a deeper understanding of reality – of the material – but informed by the lessons learned from the linguistic turn. In her argumentation she, among other things, affirms Bruno Latour's claim for a "second empiricism" and a return to a realist attitude (Hekman 2008: 88).

The new materialism, however, is not without critique. Sara Ahmed, among others, has questioned the innovative character of the new materialism, arguing that the new field grows at the expense of past works of feminist biologists as well as sidelining the contemporary work of feminist science scholars (Ahmed 2004). Indeed, the new materialism has just begun and we need to further develop and deconstruct the material/discursive couplet in order to analyze, synthesize, develop and contribute to the linguistic turn in feminist theory.

This article argues that we must display, in at least two different ways (departing from the concepts of surplus and representations), how the material contributes to discursive productions, and the development and transformation of different discourses. This would mean acknowledging nature as active in the production of discursive "truths" but without stressing the material beyond matter. Overall, the nexus between various surpluses, different representations and the material must be further problematized.

THE QUESTION OF "SURPLUSES"

In linguistic theory the question of a surplus is frequently recurring and providing us with important insights as well as a feeling of obscurity (see for example, Edkins 1999; Ricoeur 1976; Žižek 1989). For Ricoeur, the metaphorical twist becomes the very ground for explaining the extension of meaning operative in every symbol. Ricoeur argues that the symbol functions as a "surplus of signification" as there is more meaning assigned to the symbol than the literal signification. Or to put it differently, as a poem about a sunrise describes more than a meteorological phenomenon, there is an excess of signification that surpasses the literal connotation. Ricoeur (1976) explains the two interpretations:

> Only for an interpretation are there two levels of signification since it is the recognition of the literal meaning that allows us to see that a symbol still contains more meaning. This surplus of meaning is the residue of the literal interpretation. Yet for the one who participates in the symbolic signification there are really not two

> significations, one literal and the other symbolic, but rather a single movement, which transfers him from one level to the other and which assimilates him to the second signification by means of, or through the literal one (1976: 49–56.)

For Ricoeur, then, adding a symbolic meaning to the literal interpretation leads to the conclusion that there is a surplus of meaning in a symbol. This interpretation of a surplus is somewhat different from the concept of a surplus as described by Slavoj Žižek. In the texts of Žižek, the surplus, among other things, emerges as extra-discursive material, which is related to the discourse but is still excluded from the very same:

> The moment we translate class antagonism into the opposition of classes qua positive, existing social groups (bourgeoisie versus working class), there is always, for structural reasons, a surplus, a third element which does not "fit" this opposition (lumpenproletariatet, etc.). And of course, it is the same with sexual difference qua real: this, precisely, means that there is always, for structural reasons, a surplus of "perverse" excesses over "masculine" and "feminine" as two opposed symbolic identities (Žižek 2000: 132).

In contrast to Ricoeur, Žižek describes how the construction of binaries produces a surplus of meaning.

In Edkins (1999) the question of a surplus shows how the construction and categorization of names twists our interpretations of the interpreted. Consider the word "famine". According to Edkins, this name – famine – appears as a signifier connoting "a cluster of supposedly effective properties 'general and widespread shortages of food, leading to widespread death by starvation'" (Edkins 1999: 99). Thus when interpreting and mapping the "world out there" we label these occurrences "famine". However, in the next moment the relation is inverted; people are dying *because* it is a famine. In addition, the reality sometimes fails to live up to the name; reality does not measure up to the image because there are, for example, no widespread deaths. The famine, according to Edkins, is then unattainable; i.e. "a famine more than famine" (Edkins 1999: 99). Or in other words, the image "famine" is more than the real famine. The image then contains a surplus of meaning.

The above example of "names" can be understood through Foucault, who argues that the production and maintenance of discourses is organized by a number of procedures. These

procedures compose an important discursive system of exclusion. For example, some statements are kept out of the discourse since they represent the dangerous, the forbidden, which leaves us with an "inside" and an "outside" of the discourse (Foucault 1993: 7–15; Foucault 1994: 21). For example, we know what a "woman" is because of what she is not.

Processes of exclusion then create "names" such as; for example, a "woman" – the meaning connected to the name, doings/beings is slotted to correspond to the meaning of the names as well as a "surplus" of meaning. Or in other words, the name "women" has a certain meaning assigned to it and when we interpret the world we tend to understand women from our interpretations (the stereotype) of a "woman". However, the world is more complex and richer than the name (the stereotype), which leaves us with remains of reality that lie outside our conceptualizations of the real. There is a non-symbolized real that we fail to capture. Thus, the relationship between the naming and reality is a complex one:

> The process of naming has produced places within the symbolic order that things occupy. But the real does not neatly fit the symbolic space; slotting things into the symbolic order is necessary but always, according to Lacan, produces this effect of a nonsymbolizable surplus (Edkins 1999: 99).

There is always a gap between the meaning assigned to a name (for example, the descriptive features ascribed to a "woman") and the object that has been named (the real woman):

> In Lacan's version what we experience as "reality" is always already symbolized, constructed, and constituted by the symbolic. But this process of symbolization always fails: There is always a surplus that resists symbolization that remains of the real – there is always "some unsettled, unredeemed symbolic debt." Žižek argues that it is this that "returns in the guise of spectral apparitions." The specter is the part of reality that cannot be symbolized that remains outside the attempt at complete symbolization. That "reality" is always a fiction, that "reality" is symbolically or socially constructed is a separate notion. The two notions are incompatible. Žižek holds: "Reality is never directly 'itself', it presents itself only via its incomplete-failed symbolisation, and spectral apparitions emerge in this very gap that forever separates reality from the real (…)" (Edkins 1999: 119–120, Žižek in Edkins 1999: 119–120).

By this quotation, Edkins advances yet another interpretation of the concept of surplus. What Edkins describes is the material facts that are not captured within our discourses. Žižek argues the surplus "returns in the guise of spectral apparitions", and that this specter is the part of reality that cannot be symbolized, and that remains outside our attempt at complete symbolization. Reality is never directly "itself" (Žižek in Edkins 1999: 119–120).

Thus, what the concept of "surplus" embraces is ambiguously presented, which refuses the concept any fixity. The discussion of a "surplus of meaning" then in itself reflects the messiness and leakiness that appears in the discursive production. However, if we try to sort out what "surplus" means, at least three different interpretations of the concept might be advanced:

1. An excess of meaning that exceeds the literal interpretation. Or, as expressed by Ricoeur (1976): there are two levels of signification. This is due to the fact that we recognize the literal meaning and thereby are able to see that a symbol still contains more meaning (than the literal meaning).

2. A surplus of meaning that does not "fit" nicely into the discourse. In the interpretation of Žižek, the fact that we tend to interpret the world from binary constructs, such as the bourgeoisie versus working class or the "masculine" and "feminine", create a surplus – a third element that does not "fit" this opposition (for example, lumpenproletariatet, etc.) (Žižek 2000: 132).

3. Moreover, "surplus" can be seen as the non-symbolized remains of the real that exists outside what we experiences as the "real" (as described by Edkins and Žižek above).

These three different conceptualizations of a "surplus" relate to feminist studies, materiality and women's bodies in several ways. First of all, the concept of a surplus can be used to illustrate the "woman" that is more than a woman; there is an excess of meaning that exceeds the literal interpretation. For example, we know that many women sense a feeling of uneasiness as they comprehend that they fail to correspond to the image of a "woman" (Lilja 2008). This feeling might sometimes be the effect of various punishments distributed for the woman's failure to discipline in accordance with the "right" gender, and sometimes the feeling becomes the very base for resistance against gendered stereotypes. The surplus, in this regard, produces an excess of meaning and a surplus of the real that resists symbolization. Another example of this is where

bodies do not correspond to a "male body" or to a "female body", but instead they are composed of a kind of mix, or an in-between of the sexes. These bodies equally fail to match the images of the discourse.

Secondly, the surplus of meaning that constitutes a third element, which does not "fit" into the gendered opposition, affects the binary construction of the dichotomy. For example, how do subordinated femininities and masculinities affect the very binary construction of men and women that is often put forward in the media? How do queer-identifying people and their bodies either strengthen or challenge the heteronormativity based on the binary construct of heterosexual women and men? How does the surplus of "perverse" excesses over "masculine" and "feminine" as two opposed symbolic identities have subversive effects? (Connell 1999; 2005; Butler 1990, 1999)

Thirdly, the above reasoning implies that no women correspond entirely to the image or the name, of a "woman". This produces a gap – a surplus – between the name and the doing/being of the subject. Women probably universally inhabit various qualities and perform practices that lie outside the symbolization of women and the category "women" that we interpret women from. Thereby, there are remains of the real that exist outside what we experience as the "real" (the woman that is more than the "woman"). That which is deemed non-symbolizable often arouses disgust and rejection: it is seen as abject. Kristeva (1981, 1991) defines the abject as follows:

> It is not the absence of purity or health that makes something abject, but that which disturbs an identity, a system, an order. That which does not respect boundaries, places, rules. That which is in between, the ambiguous, the mixed. (1980, 1991:28)

Cathrine Wasshede argues that the abject (surplus) position can consciously be used as a tool for resistance. This resistance practice has been labeled by Wasshede as *abjectification*. Abjectification is not about claiming respectability and legitimacy *in spite of* this abject position, but instead it is about using the very rejection/abjection in order to destabilize the hegemonic order. By abjectification one might shake the boundary between purity and pollution, normal and abnormal (Wasshede 2010). It is a form of disidentification (Butler 1993).

Overall, to further theorize the connections between the discursive and the material, the question of "surplus" should be central because there are "processes of materialization" that exist outside our everyday conceptualizations of "reality". How does this materialization affect the discourses we live by? What material surplus do the discourses of exclusion produce and what

role does this surplus play in constituting the discourse? Or in other words, how does the material surplus that resists symbolization constitute the "real" and its power relations?

The questions, how do the discourses fail to overlap with the real and what it means for resistance, and as an engine for social change, are under theorized. Among other things, the gap between the "known" and the felt probably composes a powerful force in (re)constituting or (re)negotiating the discourse. Women who experience and remember things/feelings/happenings that do not correspond with things/feelings/happening as they prevail in our everyday gendered discourses, experience a gap between the felt and the known. From this experience women might try to negotiate the gendered discourses to include their divergent feelings or memories. Or in other words, memories that cannot be neatly stowed into the matrix provide material for extra-discursive experience, which foments a renegotiation of gender. How may different kinds of surpluses be used for gendered resistance? Since the existence of a surplus, and what it means in terms of power and resistance, is highly under-theorized, this must be one of the central issues within the new "material turn".

THE QUESTIONS OF REPRESENTATIONS

To broaden the discussion, let us return to the question of representations (see Lilja 2009). Representations are related to surpluses in different ways. First of all, representations make up "names". For example, the discourses about men and women are maintained through the repetition of different representations (images, statements, etc.). These images may then become subject positions to suture. However, as stated above, there is never a perfect match between the articulation and the position, leaving us with different surpluses.

Before problematizing the concept of representations further, I will take a short detour over the concept and its theoretical implications in order to provide the readers with some background material. According to Hall, what we see and hear (different representations) in "themselves" do not have a fixed, single and unchanging meaning. A little, hard, grey piece to be found on the ground can be a stone or a piece of sculpture depending on what meaning we assign to it and how we discuss it with others. Cultures or discourses are about shared meanings. When stating that two persons belong to the same culture, what is meant is that these persons represent the world in roughly the same way and can express their thoughts and feelings in ways, which will easily be understood by the other; they are exposed to, and have knowledge about, the same discourses (Hall 1997a).

As stated above, a discourse consists of a variety, or a body, of different representations that circulate and create meaning regarding the very same topic. Simply put, the concept of discourse is primarily about the production of meaning and it refers to different clusters of representations through which meanings, regarding certain topics or objects at certain times, are constructed (Henry & Tator, 2002). According to Hall, representation means "using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people" (Hall 1997b: 15). This, however, is only part of it. To represent involves not only the use of language but also of signs and images that stand for or represent things. In addition, the processes of representation do not simply make meaning present, but it also constructs meaning (Webb 2009: 30). For example, Carol Bacchi argues that governments, institutions, researchers, etc., give a particular shape to social "problems" in the ways in which we speak about them. In this understanding we are all active in the creation of particular ways of understanding issues. Bacchi calls these competing understandings of social issues "problem representations" and argues that it is crucially important to identify competing problem representations in order to display societal power-relations (Bacchi & Eveline 2010: 110–115.

Many researchers have analyzed the "real" taking the concept of representation as a point of departure; few, however, have problematized the concept – the very framework of analysis. Among the researchers who do, Spivak argues that the concept of representation is too broad and that its different connotations must be made visible (Spivak 1999).

Spivak then argues for a more precise, nailed and nuanced concept of representation. In complement to this, my own research displays how different representations are used in different combinations, with different "extras", with different purposes and thereby have different impacts (Lilja 2008, 2009, 2012). For example, I have shown how more concrete representations (such as maps, personal memories or images) sometimes have more impact in constituting the discourse than more universal representations (general statements, etc.). This way of theorizing the concept of representation means keeping the manifoldness of the concept; thus making visible its nuances, field of application, workings and impacts. This is in line with the viewpoint of Klas Grinell (2001) who underscores how the tensions and multitude of the concept constitute a delicate tool for analyzing prevailing complexities (see also Said 1994a; 1994b).

How this applies within feminist studies (in which way the tension and multitude of the concept of representation can provide us with knowledge about gendered processes of power and resistance) needs to be increasingly analyzed, thereby contributing to the feminist linguistic turn. We need to have a more profound discussion of the meaning and impact of different

representations as well as of different combinations of representations. In addition to this materiality, in interaction with the interpretation of representations, probably plays a role in sustaining different "names" and thereby in some senses "produces" our bodies. This will be explored below.

Let us remember what Hall calls a system of representation; i.e. a system "by which all sorts of objects, people and events are correlated with a set of concepts or *mental representations* which we carry around in our heads" (Hall 1997a: 17). Through the concepts – or mental representations – we understand not only easily graspable things, such as chairs and tables, but also more complex matters such as peace, passion, power or friendships. As humans we map what we see and hear; we make matches between the more abstract mental representation and the factual person/thing, etc. In the recognition – when we recognize and map the thing/person/feeling corresponding to the abstract concept – the two overlap and they support each other (Lilja 2009).

We then have the mental representations and the things in the world. However, to this reasoning must be added that the "things in the world" are also interpreted, and thereby constructed by us; we make up mental representations and from these we interpret concrete objects and map these interpretations with our mental representations. Thus, as we interpret what we see, we also construct the things/persons/feelings that we think relate, correspond or overlap with our mental representations. It is therefore in the nexus of two mental processes that the world becomes meaningful to us (Lilja 2009).

According to Hall, we might actually construct clear concepts of things or people that we have never seen in real life; for example, angels or mermaids. They do not have any "bodily matches" and therefore, we are not quite convinced that they actually exist (Hall 1997a: 17). In line with this, we need to separate the two types of representations: 1) those that form and maintain the name/the mental representation (the concept); and 2) those representations that we think match the concept in such a way that it counts as the actual real match (Lilja 2009). For example, the concept of a mermaid is maintained by sayings, narratives, and fairy-tales. We have never seen what we would consider a "real" mermaid, but we have occasionally seen a "false" one; for example, Disneyland's red-head Ariel. When we interpret masquerade mermaids such as Ariel, there are a number of her traits that do not match with (all of) our ideas of the mental representation of a "real" mermaid. Ariel, as we interpret her at Disneyland, has a plastic tail, a wig and does not live in water. As long as we don't find a perfect match, we do not believe in mermaids.

There are then representations that form our concept of mermaids and there might be a representation (that we still have not seen) that in the mapping process, and in our interpretation, corresponds to all of our ideas about mermaids. When both kinds of representations (the concept and the "real" object) prevail to us we believe in the discourse (about mermaids, non-violent men, etc.).

As we can see from the above, we are constantly mapping our ideas; i.e. our mental representations, compared with the (interpreted by us) originals to see if we get a match (Lilja 2009). Not until we get representations (one mental and one "real") that overlap or correspond will we believe in the type, figure or person and view her, him or it as a "truth". This play of representations relates to power; the discourses that regulate and form our notions of "reality" are strengthened upon the existence of corresponding representations. Resistance, then, must not only be about establishing an alternative, challenging discourse with spoken words, but also about confirming this discourse with concrete, matching, objects, practices or bodies. Put differently, not until people interpret visible representations of different images as "trustworthy", can more emancipatory gendered discourses be "proved" to be "true". For example, organizations that work against gender-based violence and for a non-violent masculinity rely heavily on role-models who make concrete, who embody, the very discourse of "peaceful men" (Lilja 2011).

The above has implications for how we must study the power/resistance couplet within feminist studies. It also puts women and men's bodies in focus and displays the relevance of how these bodies act in the public setting. To change racist or sexist discourses and establish new images of women, black people, etc., alternative, empowering discourses must be embodied by concrete human bodies that act in ways that "prove" the "truths". In addition, the above reasoning provides us with a point of departure for a discussion on the material turn. Because, the question is what are the discursive productions or material facts that make us interpret some representations as "false" and some as "real"? By acknowledging the link between the material and our discursive productions, the question that prevails regards how the material is entangled in our social constructions. Put differently, in what senses are the mapping processes created in interaction with the processes of materializing? In this regard, more research must be done in order to understand what role the material plays in convincing the readers in the mapping process. What is the real object/subject that we might interpret as a "real" mermaid? This question then composes a second question that ought to provide a point of departure of the "new material turn". The first regards the question of a material surplus and its function in regard to the discourse.

THE NEXUS OF THE MATERIAL, THE SURPLUS AND REPRESENTATION: SOME CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

This article departed from the linguistic turn of feminism, which needs to be developed in order to develop a broader theoretical understanding of the entanglements of power and resistance. Doing this means taking the linguistic perspective as a base and from this base considering what specific questions need to be addressed. One issue that needs further consideration is the question of the material. The material exists. Bodies exist. And there are different sites in which processes of materializing must be further theorized. As will be argued below, the concepts of representation and surplus should be centralized within research that aims to bring the material back into feminist studies.

First of all, the matter of a surplus is under-theorized within feminist studies and needs to be further researched. There are always different surpluses in the nexus of the name, the meaning associated with the name, other related but not included meanings and the "real" (which is interpreted, mapped or slotted in order to correspond to the name). These disparities between different layers of meaning – and, between the name, the meaning assigned to the name and the real – creates different real and discursive surpluses. These surpluses probably play a crucial role for the construction of power-loaded gendered discourses, subject positions as well as for the resistance against the very same. However, to what extent and in what way we must address the nexus between the meaning, the real and the matter of surpluses (real and discursive) must be further researched within feminist theory. Surpluses are produced in the gap between representations and the real, and in line with this encouraged us to look into the nexus of these concepts.

Secondly, the related question of representations must come into the center discussing feminist resistance. Names are created in relation to various surpluses, and in the repetition of different representations that maintain (a constantly re-created version of) the name. For example, the name "woman" is (re)constructed over time through the constant repetitions of different representations (images, statements, etc.) that repeat how a "woman" looks and behaves. In addition, this image is defined in relation to other images (for example, "men") and to different surpluses of meaning (for example, different queer identities). The naming process also displays the sliding between "she does like that because she is a woman" and "she is a woman because

she looks/behaves like one". In the naming process there is an inversion that further strengthens the idea of the "natural" behavior of women.

Moreover, our interpretations of various representations – of the real – are most certainly informed by an agentic real, which contributes to our interpretations. In this, what is important is to theorize how the material contributes to our interpretations of the real. How do bodies' articulations decide how we interpret them? For example, in order to believe in resisting alternative discourses we request that there should be some proof of the discourses. This proof prevails as we map/interpret something/someone – i.e. representations – in such a way that we believe that it corresponds with the images of the discourse. For example, my research shows that Cambodian women who have assumed a political identity and act successfully from it, can make an alternative discourse – about women's excellent political skills – trustworthy. They are interpreted so that they strengthen or "prove" a new discourse about women's political capabilities. Consequently these women and how they use their bodies can then be considered as a means of resistance (Lilja 2009). But what material facts make us interpret representations in such a way that we believe that they correspond to the image of an excellent politician? This is important to understand if we want to change the racist or the sexist discourses of today and establish new images of women, black people, etc. Again it is the matter of representations, the material and various surpluses and how this nexus makes us understand "reality". This must be further researched.

The agentic real is also an interesting concept when we try to understand why some differences are constructed and considered important (for example, the difference between "men" and "women" while other differences are interpreted as less important (for example, the difference between blue-eyed or green-eyed people). The real is always understood through layers of meaning and until now feminist linguistics, among others, have argued that the real is beyond what we can understand. Recognizing that there is a real that matters, we must try to include it into our theories. Because it is difficult to measure the real, doesn't mean that we can pretend that it is not present.

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