

Representing Pariah Femininity

Sexuality, gender, and class at the fin-de-siècle

HÉLÈNE OHLSSON

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the representation of an actress's sexuality, femininity, and class at the fin-de-siècle with an emphasis on pariah femininity. The central empirical sources for this study are the correspondence between King Oscar II (1829-1907) and Baroness Henriette Coyet (1859-1941) about the famous actress Ellen Hartman (1860-1945). Tracy C. Davis's feminist historiographical methodology is put to use in the analysis in combination with Mimi Shipper's notion pariah femininity. The analysis of the correspondence shows how the actress Ellen Hartman's femininity was discursively constructed as pariah femininity embodying asexuality, excessive sexuality, and of a degenerate moral. It is argued that Hartman's specific kind of pariah femininity is based on a perceived threat triggered by her public profession, sexual history and social ambition. Her body was sexualized, her sexuality demonized, and her appearance downgraded to defuse the threatening presence of her profession, femininity, and class. The historical sources also show a change of attitudes toward intersections of femininities and class.

KEYWORDS

Pariah femininity, sexuality, gender, class, Ellen Hartman.

Representing Pariah Femininity

Sexuality, gender, and class at the fin-de-siècle

One day in the late 1880s, King Oscar II of the united kingdoms of Sweden and Norway took his daily walk in the public garden Kungsträdgården in Stockholm. It was, at the time, a popular promenade where the Royal Dramatic theatre was also situated. Suddenly, the King walked into a tree and his hat nearly fell to the ground. Highly indignant the King scolded his courtier for not warning him of the obstacle and thereby exposing him to the embarrassment of publicly dropping his hat. The courtier excused himself with the explanation: "Your majesty, I was also busy staring at Mrs Hartman."¹

This anecdote about the King and the popular actress Ellen Hartman (1860-1945) was well known and during half a century often repeated both orally and discursively in autobiographies as well as in the press.² It communicates some of the era's gender codes by animating a professional woman who not only promoted herself through her artistic craft on stage in a theatre building, but also put her beauty and sensual body on public display on the promenade in the city. This public performance of female sexual allure resulted in the King and other men (here represented by the courtier) being so mesmerized that the latter forgot his duty to watch over his King who, in his turn, made a spectacle of himself by walking into a tree and nearly lost his headgear. The moral is, metaphorically, that even men of the highest rank can lose their heads by the sight of an actress with sex appeal.

This article discusses the representation of an actress's sexuality, femininity, and class with an emphasis on pariah femininity.³ Pariah femininity is a concept that comprises the process of demonization that generally follows when a woman embodies qualities of current hegemonic masculinity.⁴ In doing so, they challenge it, according to gender scholar Mimi Schippers. She calls them pariah femininities.⁵ Masculinity scholar Raewyn Connell developed the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which can roughly be defined as qualities that are considered the most masculine of a given culture at a given time and

-
1. s.n., *Vecko Journalen* nr. 14, 1934.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Schippers 2007, 85–102.
 4. Connell 2005, 77.
 5. Schippers, op. cit., 95.

that holds institutional power. Representatives of hegemonic masculinities do not only consider themselves superior to femininity in all forms, but also to other constructions of masculinity. When a woman embodies qualities typical of hegemonic masculinity, the qualities will become feminized and she will become demonized – pariah femininity.

The hierarchal position of hegemonic masculinity is supported not only by men, but also by certain women. Schippers uses the notion of hegemonic femininity as a wider concept that includes different types of femininities that are regarded as feminine and that sustains and legitimizes the current hegemonic masculinity.⁶ Hegemonic femininity is an umbrella term that includes many different variations of femininity and is characterized by its time, culture, age and, not least, class.

My aim is to study how the actress, Ellen Hartman, was discursively constructed as pariah femininity at the fin-de-siècle. Hartman was the same actress who is supposed to have mesmerized the King in the introductory anecdote. I will argue that her specific kind of pariah femininity was based on a perceived threat triggered by her public profession, popularity, sexual history, and social ambition. The historical sources also show a change of attitudes toward intersections of femininities and class that gave Hartman the possibility to re-negotiate her pariah femininity. I will put Tracy Davis's feminist methodology to use in combination with the concept of pariah femininity in the analysis of the archival sources.⁷

The central empirical source for this study is the correspondence between King Oscar II (1829-1907) of Sweden and Norway and Baroness Henriette Coyet (1859-1941).⁸ The correspondence between the Baroness and the King from 1897 to 1902 started around the time when Hartman's relationship to Coyet's brother became known and this liaison was their main subject. The letters are an example of how people in the upper classes in Sweden at the time thought about and spoke of actresses. The conversation was strictly private and has never before been used in research.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Tracy C. Davis suggests a theoretical framework that she calls "A Feminist methodology in Theatre History".⁹ This consists of three open questions that

6. Schippers, *op. cit.*, 94.

7. Davis 1989, 59-81.

8. Letter from Henriette Coyet to Oscar II. Oscar II:s arkiv Nr. 52, BFA. Letter from Oscar II to Henriette Coyet. Torups godsarkiv Henriette Coyets korrespondens, 1896-1941, F4: 15, LLA. The letters are written in Swedish and when cited they are translated by the author, but the Swedish original is put in the footnotes. The translations have been kept very close to the original in the meaning of the words, but sometimes I have changed the syntax in order to make it understandable in English.

9. Davis, *op. cit.*, 68.

are related to professional concerns for women who work in the theatre. The first is, “How does the ideology of the dominant culture affect women’s status?”¹⁰

The general ideology at the fin-de-siècle was that women’s status depended on whether they were domesticized or not. Gender historian David Tjeder clarifies: “In the nineteenth century, women were often by and large defined through their dependence, not least their economic dependence, on men. Dependence was part and parcel of ideal femininity.”¹¹ According to current thoughts about gender and female sexuality, performing on a stage meant that actresses voluntarily exposed themselves to a gaze that would make them erotically objectified. By doing so they achieved economic independence, though to very different degrees. Theatre historian Gilly Bush-Baily writes: “The performing woman who achieves public recognition, agency and autonomy is deeply connected with notions of female immorality forged in historically distant cultural discourses.”¹² These discourses were still in use at the fin-de-siècle, as the analysis will show. According to theatre scholar Kristina Straub, a female performer embodied opposition to the assumption that female sexuality was private, passive, and binary of male sexuality.¹³

The second question in Davis’s method is: “How does social, class and economic factors affect privilege?”¹⁴ Davis emphasizes, in her research on the working conditions for Victorian female performers, that the difference in status could be huge between a tragic actress at a royal theatre, and a dancer, comedienne, or acrobat at a theatre with a working-class audience.¹⁵ The theatre, where they worked and the genre in which they performed, influenced the status of the performer’s personal life.

Hartman was the acclaimed diva on one of Sweden’s highest ranked theatres and her name on a poster alone could fill an auditorium in theatres in all the Nordic countries. During the nineteenth century the designation of diva sometimes went to exceptionally talented female performers.¹⁶ Although she was extremely popular, Hartman had, in 1891, been scandalized and demonized in public. In an attempt to get a divorce from her actor husband, she eloped with a young lover from the nobility. When it became known that prior to her relationship with him she had been involved in an affair with his brother, her lover left her and she became the victim of a smear campaign in the press. She was stigmatized as a promiscuous gold-digger who, justly, had failed to

10. Ibid.

11. Tjeder 2003, 206.

12. Bush-Baily 2007, 29.

13. Straub 1992, 89.

14. Davis, op. cit., 70.

15. Davis, op. cit., 70-71.

16. The audience surrounded Hartman with different processes that are typical for divas of the era and in the press she was often referred to with the title.

manipulate herself into the aristocracy.¹⁷ According to general opinion, the only destiny left for a woman so publicly disgraced was to sell her sexuality in order to make a living.¹⁸ The scandal branded her pariah femininity and ultimately forced her into exile.

But Hartman saw herself as a respectable woman and identified herself as part of hegemonic femininity.¹⁹ Determined to regain the veneration of the Swedish audience, she started to work on an international career.²⁰ Exiled in Paris, she worked with the internationally famous actor Benoit Constant Coquelin, called Coquelin aîné, and joined him on his tour to Russia and the Nordic countries in 1892. After her appearance in Stockholm as a French-speaking actress, it became clear that the audience wanted her to come back. Upon her return to Sweden, she changed her public image and assumed a public persona as diva.²¹ Between 1893-98, she dominated the repertoire at the Royal Dramatic theatre through plays containing her signature label as a performer: the comical ingénue. Because of her importance for the economy of the Royal Dramatic Theatre, she had much power in choosing her roles. She didn't try to hide her wound of sexual notoriety, but rather carried it like a crown jewel by often choosing roles where her scandal, air of dangerous sexuality and un-normative behavior resonated in some way. By re-negotiating her shame into triumph, she became even more popular than before. Through her privileged position, her popularity, and public image as a diva, she was hard to categorize as belonging to a certain class. Gilly Bush-Baily stresses that for an actress; the best protection from gossip was to belong to a theatrical family as a wife or a daughter, but as being the guilty party in a divorce, and with a publicly known scandal that revealed too much sex with too many men, Hartman's brand as pariah femininity took hold.²²

The third question in Davis's feminist methodology is: "How is status quo maintained or challenged in artistic media?"²³ The status quo referred to is the current ideological gender structure. Davis poses the question, does the conservative structure of the theatre uphold a sexist structure that is transmitted through an artistic media? And if so, how does it work and how is it maintained by and for the practitioners inside the theatre?²⁴ This question has been the most important tool in the analysis of the sources.

Actresses, during the nineteenth-century, like the representatives of hegemonic masculinity, took part in public life, had a public voice, cultural authori-

17. Ohlsson 2016, 88-92.

18. s.n. *Borås Tidning*, 23.04.1892, KB.

19. Letter from Clarence von Rosen to Clara Jessup Moore, 21.06.1891, Clarence von Rosens arkiv, RA.

20. Ohlsson, op. cit., 92-98.

21. Ohlsson, op. cit., 101.

22. Bush-Baily, op. cit., 24.

23. Davis, op. cit., 71.

24. In this article, the letters are treated as a sort of artistic media, even though the correspondence was strictly private.

ty, and, even though it varied, economic independence. Although they lacked institutional power, they had power as role models. I suggest that actresses in general were often regarded with suspicion by contemporary bourgeois society, and viewed as not completely respectable, even if they lived respectable private lives as many of them did. Often actresses were regarded as a sort of “pariah femininity light” that would become baser if she was not domesticated as a wife or daughter of a theatrical family. After 1891, Hartman lived alone, was recognized by everyone, and had a substantial economic income. None of these circumstances helped her to raise her stocks in respectability, but rather the contrary.

THE HAZARD OF THE ANECDOTE

Theatre scholar Catherine Hindson claims that there are two main problems inherent in the study of the female celebrity’s physicality:

They are to be discovered both in ideas and anxieties concerning gender ideology and embodiment, and in pervasive hierarchical and intellectualist approaches to performance and culture. Together, these archaic, dualistic divisions between high and low culture, and the body and the mind, are powerful and questionable.²⁵

Since the late twentieth century, academic feminist theatre history has undergone a process of change towards inclusion of a wider range of sources and study of women’s working conditions, sexuality, and bodies with, for example, works by Tracy C. Davis, Catherine Hindson, Kristina Straub, Gilly Bush-Baily, and many more not mentioned in this article. This academic ideological turning point is a prerequisite for my own research and has worked as a guideline.

The introductory anecdote communicates knowledge by emphasizing the impact Hartman’s sexuality had on at least some of her male audience and how her contemporaries liked to gossip about her relationships with men, but it says nothing about her artistic legacy. Although Hartman was regarded as an outstanding actress by her many fans, her legacy has, until later years, often come to be connected to her sexuality.²⁶ When Hartman is mentioned in popular theatre studies and even in some books specializing in the theatre of her era, the introductory anecdote or other stories of her amorous adventures has, in many ways, come to define her.²⁷ In fictional stories too, she is presented as

25. Hindson 2007, 43.

26. In an account of royal extramarital relationships Hartman gets a chapter. See: Lindenbaum 1952, 232-249. In a book from 2004 Hartman continues to be associated with mistresses of royalty. See: Sundberg 2004, 233. In neither book is any reference presented that can confirm the rumor. In this way, her association with the King is reproduced instead of her artistic achievements. In Swedish *Wikipedia* Hartman is noted as Oscar II’s designated lover.

27. Löfgren 2003, 219-222; Torsslow 1975, 33.

a promiscuous woman and sometimes as the mistress of the King.²⁸ Whether she was his lover or not is unknown and goes beyond the topic of this article, but as Gilly Bush-Baily writes: “what is really at stake here is the matter of women’s influence, power and autonomy and the way that gossip has worked to elide her public and private identity in a bid to contain her within the dominant constructs of female social behavior”.²⁹

Obviously, the entertainment value in these anecdotes holds a temptation for an historian, but by retelling stories that highlight Hartman as a frivolous sex kitten without problematizing them, the story is reproduced that her most important deed in Swedish theater history was displaying her sexuality and not her acting craft. That Hartman’s main genre was a modern, comical ingénue was a fact that helped to downgrade her importance in historiography since a serious, preferably tragic and classical repertoire, is generally considered to enhance artistic credibility and status. This results in a sexualization of the actress as being more body than mind and thus artistic lightweight to standards of historiography of the twentieth century. I would argue that this narrative works as a tool to maintain the status quo in theatre history, and to downgrade historical actresses’ actual agency and influence.

FEMINIST GAZE ON EMPIRICAL SOURCES

As an addition to Davis’s feminist methodology in theatre history I would suggest imaginative detective work in the archives to find new sources. The existence of the letters in this article was not obvious, but was found by a long shot.³⁰ I discovered the King’s letters to Coyet in her archive in Lund in the south of Sweden, and the remaining letters of Coyet’s to the King in the archive at the Royal Palace in Stockholm.³¹ Bearing in mind that the letters communicate an agenda that is very close to gossip, I would suggest that this kind of material contains knowledge that, in feminist theatre history, can be pivotal since it reveals how gender was discursively constructed. Thus, for a feminist methodology, I argue for the importance of this type of source and also for the reconsideration of sources that previous generations of theatre historians have condemned as tainted by gossip.

28. Lang 1986, 79; Olofsson, 1987, 143-149.

29. Bush-Baily, *op. cit.*, 17.

30. One anecdote about Hartman, although not the one mentioned above, made me suspect that there might exist letters where she was discussed by King Oscar II and Baroness Coyet, who was Hartman’s sister-in-law in her second marriage.

31. Letters from Oscar II to Henriette Coyet. 16.06.1897, 22.06.1897, 12.05.1898, 24.05.1898, 18.12.1898, 24.12.1898. Henriette Coyets korrespondens, 1901-1931, F 4: 9. Letter from Ellen Hartman to Henriette Coyet, 22.06.1920. Henriette Coyets korrespondens 1894-1934, F 4: 3. Letters from Claes Cederström to Henriette Coyet, onsdag natt [probably 18.05.1898], 20.05.1898, Torups godsarkiv, LLA. Letters from Henriette Coyet to Oscar II, 16.06.1897, 22.06.1897, 24.05.1899, 28.10.1902, Oscar II:s arkiv Nr. 52, BFA.

THE POTENTIAL THREAT OF PARIAH FEMININITY

In 1897, there was gossip about Hartman's love affair with Baron Bror Cederström. His older sister, Baroness Henriette Coyet, was generally called "the Queen of Skåne", which was the name of the region in the south of Sweden where she lived. She was very rich, very grand, and a leading figure in the aristocracy of the south. In the analysis, her voice will represent the hegemonic femininity of the aristocracy of the time. The narratives of both Coyet and the King use old-fashioned Swedish spelling. Coyet does not use interpunctuation in the same degree as the King, but dashes.³² He, on the other hand, is more modern in his use of interpunctuation and dashes, which turned out to be important in the analysis.³³

The first letters between the King and Coyet in 1897 make it clear that they initially had met in Stockholm and, on that occasion, had discussed the bond between Hartman and Coyet's brother. Coyet wanted to know how to handle the knowledge of the relationship and sought the King's advice. Since her brother was single and Hartman divorced, Coyet's ultimate horror was that her brother would marry the actress, but she was also generally distressed by the affair. The King had advised her to speak to her brother, which she took the courage to do upon her return to the south. Afterwards she writes to thank the King and lets him know that her brother had assured her that neither he nor Hartman were contemplating marriage at this point.³⁴

In his answer, the King advised Coyet that if the relationship continued "in silence" and the couple didn't "cause a scandal", she should "simply close her eyes" to the affair.³⁵ This advice reveals the conservative ideology of the era that an actress was an accepted sexual commodity of a noble man as long as she remained a mistress and not aspired to become his wife. The King thus revealed his double standards, which suggest that he had a pragmatic view on sexual relations out of wedlock:

However, I firmly believe that she [Hartman] believes in the idea that this [a marriage] would be the result and that she until then - as she did in a previous, well-known similar case a few years ago - controlled herself and kept him at - a

32. The general narrative in her letters to the King is subdued and humble. She thanks him over and over again that she is allowed to turn to him for her problems, excuses herself that she takes up his valuable time, that she becomes too personal, and so on. She also flatters the King in different ways like emphasizing his identity as a poet. It was common knowledge that the King wanted to be regarded as a literary man since he wrote poetry in his spare time.

33. In 1906 there was a spelling reform in Sweden.

34. Letter from Henriette Coyet to Oscar II, 16.06.1897, BFA. "[A]tt det ej var fråga om giftermål - att hvarken han eller hon tänkte derpå".

35. Letter from Oscar II to Henriette Coyet 16.06.1897, LLA. "Men om de fortsätta ett förhållande i tysthet, som ej störer någon annan, ej länder till skandal, och gräl mellan kamrater, då är mitt råd att Ettan - blundar helt simpelt, och låter tiden hverka vad den kan."

distance, which for a nature like hers I think was easy, for she seems to me to be very able to infatuate others, but hardly gets warmed up herself, if calculation is not included in the game.³⁶

That the King emphasizes that he is referring to a situation well known, suggests that he is referring to Hartman's scandal in 1891 that was publicly known. By putting a dash before "- controlled herself" and also before "- a distance", I interpret that the King implied that he was referring to something taboo. The dashes emphasize that she controlled herself and kept him at a distance not in a general way, but in a special way and in a specific situation. I interpret that the King is in fact speaking about Hartman's conduct in intimate settings with her ex-lover in 1891. In the quote, it also becomes clear that the King was convinced that Hartman's sexual nature was cold and that, even in a tender moment, she would not become passionate nor desirous. The King declares that although Hartman was very skilled in the art of making men fall in love with her, she would not be "warmed up" herself – in the sense of becoming interested or being turned on – unless she had something to gain from it. The choice of words like "a nature like hers" and get "warmed up", suggests that he believes that Hartman's sexuality was manipulative and false. The narrative of the King creates the image of an asexual woman who pretends to be passionate to gain a profit while her body and feelings remain cold.

The King continues: "Her subsistence is the theater, and hopefully, yes, it is likely, that she will not let it come to conditions which cause him to think of marriage with her by 'honorary constraint'. I assume I'm understood."³⁷ The use of quotation marks around "honorary constraint" in combination with the last sentence, suggests to me that the King assumes he is understood to be speaking about sex, but that he does not want to become more explicit than he already is. He tells Coyet that he does not think that Hartman would get herself pregnant. For me his detailed analysis of Hartman's sexual nature and conduct implies that he had given it quite a lot of thought and probably had discussed the actress's sexuality on other occasions. Whether the King actually had some kind of knowledge of these intimate details of Hartman's love life and sexual nature, or if he was only speculating, remains unknown. What is clear though, is that his words are associated with ancient discourses of actresses'

36. Letter from Oscar II to Henriette Coyet 16.06.1897, LLA. "Deremot tror jag fullt och fast att hon invaggat sig i föreställningen att detta (äktenskap förf. anm.) skulle bli resultatet och att hon tills dess – i likhet med hon gjorde vid ett föregående, välkändt liknande fall för några år sedan – beherrskade sig och höll honom på – afstånd, hvilket för en natur som hennes jag tror var lätt, ty hon förefaller mig väl kunna bedåra andra, men svårligen sjelf värmas upp, när ej beräkningen är med i spelet."

37. Letter from Oscar II to Henriette Coyet 16.06.1897, LLA. "Hennes lifsupphälle är ju theatern, och det är att hoppas, ja, det är troligt, att hon ej skall låta det komma till förhållanden som föranlåta honom att tänka på giftermål med henne af 'hederstvång'. Jag förmodar jag är förstådd."

manipulative nature and dubious sexuality. Susan Bassnett stresses that: “The notion of acting as disguise, the connections between disguise and deceit, and between deceit and immorality,” date back to the Reformation and Counter-reformation when female respectability acquired “a new status”.³⁸ The King’s opinion of Hartman’s agenda with her relationships and the notion that she uses her acting talent in her sexual life refers back to these anti-theatrical discourses.

A year later, in 1898, the theater house of the Royal Dramatic theatre was about to undergo a renovation and a reorganization of the management. In this situation Hartman decided to leave the stage and marry Coyet’s brother. Now, other family members tried to persuade Bror Cederström not to marry the actress, like a younger brother who was convinced that Hartman betrayed his brother with another man. He writes to Coyet; “Furthermore, through my investigation, I have now been fully confident that she [Hartman] often disappears from home at night in her wagon, which stands at Narva Road, and goes where, yes into the arms of Wijk. I cannot prove this yet, but hope one day I can.”³⁹ The King also refers to the current rumors about Hartman’s frivolity:

I do not want to listen to the gossip, and have not the remotest evidence of what has been said, but rumors have not been lacking that E.H., [Ellen Hartman] not even this time, has acted as carefully as she could and should have been expected of her - yes demanded, under the conditions you suggested.⁴⁰

The conditions that Coyet had told him was that the actress and her brother were about to get engaged. I interpret that the King alludes to the same speculations as Coyet’s younger brother: that Hartman had several lovers simultaneously. So, in the King’s previous discourses, Hartman’s libido was described as more or less none existent and only generated when she had something to gain, but in this letter, he implies that Hartman’s sexuality is excessive since he refers to the rumors of her promiscuity. This is a construction of pariah femininity where Hartman’s frigidity appears unnatural and, at the same time, her sexuality is suggested as being excessive and, therefore, also unnatural. According to Kristina Straub, “the actress figures discursively as the site of an excessive sexuality that must be – but never fully is – contained or repressed.”⁴¹

38. Bassnett 1989, 111.

39. Letter from Claes Cederström to Henriette Coyet, 20.05.1898, LLA. “Vidare har jag nu genom min efterforskning fått full visshet om att hon [Hartman] ofta om nätterna försvinner hemifrån hoppas upp i sin vagn som står vid Narva vägen och far hvar, jo i armarna på Wijk. Detta kan jag ännu ej bevisa men hoppas en dag kunna göra det.”

40. Letter from Oscar II to Henriette Coyet 12.05.1898, LLA. “Jag vill icke lyssna till pratet, och har icke ens de aflägsnaste bevis på hvad som pratats, men rykten hafva ej felats, att E.Hn., ej heller på den sednaste tiden, skulle så försigtigt hafva uppfört sig, som man under de förhållande du antytt kunde och borde hafva väntat – ja fordrat.”

41. Straub, op. cit., 89.

This means that the King's discourses on Hartman's sexuality can be read as an answer to a threat posed by the unnatural in the actress's simultaneous combination of manipulative asexuality and excessive sexuality. Gilly Bush-Baily emphasizes: "The most vehement gossip, however, is launched against those actresses who used their on-stage performance to raise their off-stage position in society by marriage."⁴²

At the end of the day, however, and after much drama, Bror Cederström refused to give up Hartman. In his next letter, the King explained to Coyet that he was concerned about the future of the Royal Dramatic Theater. It becomes clear that he did not want to lose its most important star, mainly because Hartman was the one who brought in the money, even though he did not put it so bluntly. In this way, his agenda coincided with Coyet's and he made a final attempt to stop, or at least delay, the wedding:

I understand that Br. [Bror] was unable to find or induce enough strong will to take any initiative with regard to a reprieve. Therefore, I have allowed myself to do it in that I requested of Mrs (EH) [Ellen Hartman] that if the provisory plan for the Dramatic Theater's activities for the next three years were to be a reality (as it daily seems to be more likely), she would have to take reengagement for one year or until 1899 in the summer, "Which would be good for the whole company which will have a hard time at first," I added.⁴³

Even though the King writes that he "requested" Hartman to reengage, it was generally regarded as a command. This becomes clear from a letter from Coyet's younger brother where he writes: "[I]t was virtually decided she would stay at the theater and this because the King ordered her to do so".⁴⁴ The press, who got news of the story, also wrote that she would re-engage "on the highest order".⁴⁵ It also becomes clear that the King tried to pressure Hartman

42. Bush-Baily, op. cit., 23.

43. Letter from Oscar II to Henriette Coyet 18.05.1898, LLA. "Jag kunde nog först att Br. [Bror] icke inom sig sjelf kunde finna eller förmå frammana nog kraftig vilja, att taga något initiatif med afseende på uppskof. Derföre har jag tillåtit mig att göra det, i det jag uppmanade Fru (E.H) att om provisoriskt uppehållande af Dramatiska Theaterns verksamhet under tre år kan komma till stånd (såsom numera synes dagligen allt sannolikare) – hon då måtte taga Réengagement på ett år eller till 1899 om sommaren, 'hvilket ock vore bra för truppen som under första tiden får det svårast', tillade jag." The organization of the Royal Dramatic theatre was going to change and it was unclear how and where the theatre would exist in the fall of 1898. According to the King these structural changes in the theatre played a significant part in her decision to leave the stage.

44. Letter from Claes Cederström to Henriette Coyet, 20.05.1898, LLA. "[D]et var så gott som afgjort hon stannar vid teatern å detta derför att Kungen befallit henne derom".

45. s.n., *Dagen* 23.05.1898, KB: "Och så I lördags, visste man berätta, att hon – på

to take responsibility for her colleagues and, actually, for the whole economy of the theatre.

First, Hartman refused to sign the contract, but declining a king's command obviously took its toll. In the evening, after becoming sick through worry, she sent a message through a colleague to the King that she would sign it. The next day, Hartman changed her mind once again and finally refused. She explained afterwards that the reason she went back on her word was that her colleague had misunderstood her, and because she had been sick and in a state of vertigo. Under stress in her private life, Hartman had a tendency to represent herself in accordance with a high strung and nervous femininity. The King, on the other hand, saw her changing her mind as proof that she "lacked love of truth".⁴⁶ The King does not expressly link her falsehood to her profession, but if the totality of his discourses is taken into consideration, including the ones that follow, I would argue that he associated Hartman's going back on her word with a deceitfulness that derived from her acting skills.

Confronted with the fact that the wedding would take place, both the King and Coyet capitulated: The King writes: "Perhaps we have all mistaken ourselves, and that afterwards - so to speak - she will change her skin. ? !! But I must say, though I do not claim to be a preacher of morality, that her current 'skin' is not as pure as desired for a Baroness C-n. [Cederström]." ⁴⁷ According to Schipper, embodied pariah femininity is not necessarily regarded as hierarchically subordinate in society since different factors like, for example, class, birth, and economic means must be taken into account, but it is considered, so to speak, as dirty, infects the current gender structure, and is often perceived as threatening. The King's comment about Hartman's unclean skin shows how Hartman, as pariah femininity, was likely to bedraggle both the gender- and class structure of the nobility when she became a Baroness. I suggest that for the King to discursively try to repress or contain Hartman's paradoxical and devious sexuality was a means to uphold the status quo in both the current gender- and class structure. He advised Coyet:

It would be best to receive her after being married, worthy, friendly but no more warm than absolutely necessary in anticipation of the outcome of the trial that time may give. [...] But always remember that her stage-talents and habits are

allerhögsta order! – komme att stanna ännu ett år."

46. Letter from Oscar II to Henriette Coyet 24.05.1898, LLA. "Det löfte fru H. gifvit mig genom Hr Personne, bröt hon, under föregifvande, dels att hennes broder (aktören H.) hade missförstått henne, dels sednare (när hon ansåg sig behöfva åberopa "förtviflans sjukdomsfall") att hon, var i full yrsel när hon gaf löftet! Allt detta visar hennes brist på sanningskärlek!"
47. Letter from Oscar II to Henriette Coyet 24.05.1898, LLA. "Kanske att vi alla misstagit oss, och att hon hädanefter - så att säga - byter om skinn. ?!! Men jag måste, ehuru jag ej pretenderar att vara moralpredikant säga, att hennes n.v. 'skinn' icke är så rent som önskligt för en friherrinna C-n."

very large. And “stage fright” (other than possibly pretended and fake) she has long since outgrown!⁴⁸

Here, the King clearly associates Hartman’s deceitful nature and manipulations with her profession. In this way the King also associates performing women in general with at least the potential of pariah femininity.

STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH PARIAH FEMININITY

Just before Christmas 1898 the King had to adjust his curiosity:

I wonder so much how the menage ‘Bror – Ellen’ is working out and what attitude Malmoe officer circles and elsewhere have towards the new ‘firm’ and especially to her? Also, I’m curious to know, how she can act and play her role because that she still plays, I do not doubt for a minute!⁴⁹

Here, the King, once again, assures Coyet that Hartman is playing a role in her personal life that is a fake and completely separated from her, so to speak, true self. Coyet’s answer is missing, but from the King’s answer in his turn it becomes clear that it contained Coyet’s impression upon her first meeting with Hartman, and an outline of an admonishing speech Coyet had given her on this occasion. This was probably a sort of lecture on what was required of the actress in her new rank as Baroness.⁵⁰ The King answered:

I have the full impression that your way of treating her and the whole thing was the best possible, and probably touched her, for the moment. It is unfortunate that she probably does not have anything deeper inside her and her previous life has not been any suitable dredge to deepen the drain from the wild sea to a safe harbor! She is not alone to be blamed for everything, but that does not make things better.⁵¹

48. Letter from Oscar II to Henriette Coyet 24.05.1898, LLA. “Det torde vara bäst att mottaga henne, sedan hon blifvit gift, värdigt, vänligt men ej mera varmt än alldeles nödvändigt i afvaktan på attfallet (sic) af den pröfning, som tiden må gifva. [...] Skrif, om icke förr, så när den nya svägerskan (!) kommit ner och inför edra pröfvande blickar. Men kommen alltid ihåg, att hennes sceniska-talang och vana äro mycket stora. Och ‘rampfeber’ (annat än möjligen låtsad och falsk) har hon längesedan vuxit ifrån!”

49. Letter from Oscar II to Henriette Coyet 18.12.1898, LLA. “Jag undrar så mycket huru ménagen ‘Bror – Ellen’ går och huru man i Malmö Officers Cirklar samt eljest, ställer sig till den nya ‘firman’, och speciellt till henne? Äfven är jag nyfiken få veta huru hon kan ställa sig och spela sin roll, ty att hon ännu spela drager jag ej en minut i tvifvel!”

50. Letter from Oscar II to Henriette Coyet 24.12.1898, LLA.

51. Letter from Oscar II to Henriette Coyet 24.12.1898, LLA. “Jag har det fulla intryck att ditt sätt att behandla henne och hela saken varit det aldri bästa möjliga, och nog berört henne för stunden. Olyckan är att hon nog icke har något djupare inombords och hennes föregående lefnad har ju ej heller egt något passande

Possibly, the King, with the metaphor of the drain from the wild sea, is referring to Hartman's admirers and fans who had indulged her ego, but with his comment that she was not entirely to blame, I am also inclined to argue that he regarded the general atmosphere of the theatre as corrupting for a woman's character and moral. Coyet gave a report on the general feeling of the presence of the pariah femininity amongst the nobility:

We have so far avoided inviting her together with any of our neighbors - partly because I know that they prefer to avoid meeting with her for the longest time possible and partly because I am increasingly convinced that it is for the best and healthiest for her to notice that there are still conditions that are not easily excused or forgotten - For Bror's sake, it has often been hard for me to keep my mind and to let them live as isolated as they have all this winter - but the more I see of her the less I trust her and I think it would be such a happiness for her or really for Bror and everything if something could bring her to seriousness and give her a sense of responsibility, make her feel that everything in life cannot be trifled with without punishment - I would like to hope for it but I hardly dare - Your Majesty has sadly judged her right- when your Majesty told me that she has too shallow a nature to harbor a deep feeling that could transform her into something else then she has become so far - but perhaps it may turn her to some kind of reflection when she meets this silent treatment - that despite all, is directed towards her and her past down here - she can probably not feel quite unconcerned.

52

How did Hartman behave in order to be judged by the King and Coyet as having a shallow character, lack seriousness and responsibility? Coyet alludes

mudderverk för att fördjupa rännan ifrån hvillande hafvet till säker hamn! Man får ej odelat rikta anklagelsen mot henne för allting, men det blir icke bättre för det!"

52. Letter from Henriette Coyet to Oscar II, 24.05.1899, BFA. "Vi ha hittills med flit undvikit att bjuda henne tillsammans med någon af våra grannar – dels därför att jag vet att dessa helst i det längsta vilja undvika att sammanträffa med henne och dels därför att jag mer och mer blir öfvertygad om att det är bäst och helosammast för henne sjelf att märka att det ändå finns förhållanden som ej så lätt ursäktas eller glöms – För Brors skull har det ofta känts svårt för mig att hålla min föresats och att låta dem lefva så isolerade som de gjort hela denna vinter – men ju mer jag ser henne ju mindre tillit får jag för henne och jag tycker det vore en sådan lycka för henne eller egentligen för Bror och det hela om någonting kunde bringa henne till alvar och ansvarskänsla komma henne till känna att allting i lifvet ej kan ostraffat lekas med - Jag skulle så gerna vilja hoppas derpå men vågar det knappast – Ers majestät har nog tyvärr alltför rätt bedömt henne – när Ers Majestät sade mig att hon var har allt för grund natur för att bli mäktig någon djup känsla som skulle kunna omdana henne till någonting annat än hvad hon hittills blifvit – men kanske kan det ändå väcka henne till någon sorts eftertanke när hon möts af detta tysta ogillande – som trots här nere känns riktade mot sig och sitt förflutna - aldeles oberörd kan hon nog inte känna sig deraf."

to Hartman's scandal in 1891 when she speaks about things that cannot be forgotten. Hartman's former sexual scandal and the gossip of promiscuity that surrounded her were without a doubt the main reasons for her current stigmatization, but, according to Coyet's letter, this also seems to have been visible in Hartman's bodily behaviour. This is supported by an event that Coyet recounts.

Together with her brother and Hartman, Coyet had visited a horse exhibition in Malmö where she had the opportunity to see "my sister for the first time perform down here among our circle of friends".⁵³ On this occasion they had also dined at a restaurant. Coyet had, in advance, asked two couples from the high nobility if they would allow her to present Hartman to them. "And when they agreed, she was thus able to make the acquaintance of these ladies."⁵⁴ This emphasis suggests that the acceptance of respectable women of the hegemonic femininity were vital in order to re-negotiate Hartman's pariah femininity.

Coyet continues to recount the occasion: "[H]er behaviour was generally calm and good - but you always have that feeling with her - you do not know what moment there is a sudden horrible change and her old habits, once again, take their toll".⁵⁵ When Coyet talks of Hartman's old habits, does she mean her past extramarital relationships? Or something less spectacular like the possibility that Hartman would suddenly start to behave like the opposite of calm and good, for example high-spirited and bad? Or did Coyet believe that extramarital relations and mirth were in any way connected with each other? I tend to lean towards the last option considering the gossip about Hartman's promiscuity that circulated, but this is mere speculation; basically, it remains unclear what Coyet meant. Kristina Straub argues that class played a crucial role in the perception of an actress's sexuality. The lower the class of an actress's origin, the more promiscuous she was discursively described.⁵⁶ Coyet's compliment that Hartman acted calm and well implies that the bodily behavior of current hegemonic femininity in the aristocracy was quiet, slow, and controlled. Hartman's acting style was known for being physically active, and vivacity also distinguished her personality. But even though Hartman had behaved correctly at the restaurant, I interpret Coyet to mean that the actress's lower, or rather ambiguous class because of her diva status, made her ignorant in how to act according to the measures of the higher class she now belonged to.

53. Letter from Henriette Coyet to Oscar II, 24.05.1899, BFA. "[D]å jag sett min svägerska för första gången uppträda här nere bland vår umgängeskrets".

54. Letter from Henriette Coyet to Oscar II, 24.05.1899, BFA. "[O]ch då de gingo in derpå - fick hon ju härigenom göra dessa fruars bekantskap".

55. Letter from Henriette Coyet to Oscar II, 24.05.1899, BFA. "Nu vid hästutställningen gjorde hon emellertid en del bekantskaper och hennes uppträdande var på det hela taget ganska stillsamt och bra - men man har den känslan med henne alltid - att man ej vet hvilket ögonblick det sker ett grufligt omslag och hennes gamla vanor taga ut sin rätt."

56. Straub, *op. cit.*, 90-91

Hartman and her husband probably left the table at the restaurant before the others, because the aristocratic couples seem to have discussed Hartman's appearance with Coyet. "[H]er performance was on the whole very correct on this occasion - but she surprised everyone by looking so remarkably not well - Her features have recently become sagging and old - but maybe that is due to a reaction after her former variable life style."⁵⁷ Coyet also retells one comment that was said about Hartman's looks by a man in the party: "Luckily for Bror [the name of Coyet's brother] she has recently become so dreadfully ugly."⁵⁸ Probably the man meant that her ugliness would prevent her from being unfaithful as now, men would not desire her. Coyet's thought that Hartman's ugliness was a reaction to her previous life style suggests that it was considered common knowledge that a woman's class, moral, and dissolute sexuality ultimately would show in her looks. By marrying Hartman, Coyet's brother had, in the eyes of his peers, brought a woman of lower class and tainted with pariah femininity in to his family and social circuit. I argue that emphasizing her physical flaws and branding her ugly was a strategy to repress the actress's new class through her social elevation to the nobility. Even though Hartman's social rank had now become equal to other members of the nobility, she herself had become old and ugly and thereby lost the status that for a woman is associated with beauty and youth. Thus, a form of status quo remained intact.

THE RE-NEGOTIATION OF PARIAH FEMININITY

Three years later, Coyet let the King know that her brother and Hartman were happy:

More and more, she has become a nice and good wife for Bror - and I sincerely hope that their relationship will develop as it has done so far - to both their happiness - in many respects, she is very different from us siblings - but that is just natural and does not matter when she is nice and does her best in her current circumstances.⁵⁹

57. Letter from Henriette Coyet to Oscar II, 24.05.1899, BFA. "[S]jelf uppförde hon sig aldeles korrekt vid detta tillfälle - men förvånade alla genom att se så märkvärdigt litet bra ut - Det har kommit någonting så underligt slapt och gammalt öfver henne - men det är kanske reaktionen efter det rörliga lif hon fört hittills."

58. Letter from Henriette Coyet to Oscar II, 24.05.1899, BFA. "Johannes Wrangel som jag tror sedan gammalt känner henne ganska väl sade mycket betecknande om henne- 'det lyckligtvis för Bror är att hon blifvit så förfärligt ful på sista tiden' och kanske han har rätt."

59. Letter from Henriette Coyet to Oscar II, 28.10.1902, BFA. "Hon har allt mera blifvit en snäll och bra fru för Bror - och jag hoppas innerligt att deras samlif måtte komma att utveckla sig som hittills - till begge deras lycka - i många afseenden är hon ju oss andra syskon mycket olik - men det är ju endast helt naturligt och gör ju heller ingenting när hon är snäll och gör sitt bästa i sina nuvarande förhållanden."

Since Coyet speaks of Hartman's difference directly before she informs the King that the actress tries to behave according to her new circumstances, I would suggest that Coyet means that Hartman's difference from the rest of the family was due to the fact that she belonged to a lower class. However, Coyet obviously appreciated her and had developed a form of familiarity with her:

The first years of her [Hartman's] marriage were not so easy - but she says that she now understands that they were useful - and I think her relationship with Bror has developed the best sides of her nature - at least it seems - now she has a very good position in Malmoe and everyone is kind to her.⁶⁰

As Coyet describes it, Hartman showed no resentment towards the people in society who had ostracized her, but concluded that they had taught her something useful. I interpret this as a conscious and calculating attitude from a former pariah femininity that now has re-negotiated her femininity and class. Hartman's grateful words emphasize her humility and magnanimity, which reveals that she, at this point, had mastered the performance of hegemonic femininity.

CONCLUSION

In the correspondence of the King and Coyet, Hartman's femininity was discursively constructed as pariah femininity that embodied asexuality, excessive sexuality, and degenerate morals. The King also associated these characteristics with her acting craft. Hartman's body was sexualized, her sexuality demonized, and her appearance downgraded to defuse the threatening presence of her pariah femininity and class in aristocratic circles. These discourses can be regarded as a continuity of ancient views on actresses that during the twentieth century started to change, although similar discourses can still be found on some Internet chat-pages. Another way of upholding the status quo in historiography can be seen in the reproduction of anecdotes about Hartman, which emphasize her sexuality instead of her artistic legacy. Hartman's specific brand of pariah femininity was based on a perceived threat triggered by her sexuality, fame, and social ambition, and above all – her refusal to let either her professional or personal life be defined and limited by her sexual history.

After a couple of year's marriage, Hartman eventually became accepted within the aristocracy. This process was a protracted turning point. Hartman succeeded in relation to her sister-in-law to re-negotiate her pariah femininity and, to some extent, her social class, even though Coyet seems to have acted

60. Letter from Henriette Coyet to Oscar II, 28.10.1902, BFA."De första åren af hennes äktenskap voro ej så lätta – men hon säger sjelf att hon nu förstår att de varit nyttiga – och jag tror att hennes samlif med Bror utvecklade hennes naturs bästa sidor – så förefaller det åtminstone - nu har hon en mycket bra ställning i Malmö och alla äro vänliga mot henne."

as a self-proclaimed teacher to Hartman in her new femininity and social rank.⁶¹ Hartman seems to have accepted this unequal structure in their friendship and often asked Coyet for advice, even in old age. Writer Alice Lyttkens, who knew both sisters-in-law in her childhood, claimed that both women gained in the exchange.⁶² Hartman, tainted with pariah femininity, achieved status in society and protection from gossip through her powerful sister-in-law, and Coyet gained unconventional humor, glamour, and charm in her stiff salon through the famous diva.

In 1920, Hartman made a comeback as an actress and continued to make guest appearances during the whole decade. At that point, her social position was secure and her professionalism widely admired, also within the aristocracy. In her comeback, Hartman was encouraged by Coyet. In this way they both acted as agencies in the process to make acting a respectable profession for women of all classes, although this process also mirrored a general change of attitudes in society. Against all odds, the actress representing pariah femininity and the Baroness embodying the hegemonic femininity of the aristocracy formed a successful alliance.

References

Bassnett, Susan. 1989. "Struggling with the Past: Women's Theatre in Search of a History." *New Theatre Quarterly* 5:18, 107-112. DOI: 10.1017/S0266464X00002992.

Bush-Baily, Gilly. 2007. "Revolution, legislation and autonomy." In Maggie. B. Gale & John Stokes, (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Actress*. Cambridge: University Press, 15-32.

Connell, Raewyn, 2005. *Masculinities*, 2. ed.. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Davis, Tracy C. 1989. "Questions for a Feminist Methodology in Theatre History." In Thomas Postlewait, & Bruce A. McConachie, (eds.), *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*, 1. ed. Iowa City: Univ. of Iowa Press, 59-81.

Hindson, Catherine, 2007. *Female Performance Practice on the Fin-de-siècle Popular Stages of London and Paris: Experiment and advertisement*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Lang, Maria. 1986. *Dödligt drama på Dramaten*. Stockholm: Norstedts.

61. Letter from Ellen Hartman to Henriette Coyet, Falsterbohus 22.06.1920, LLA.

62. Lyttkens 1977, 92.

Lindenbaum, Arne. 1952. Ellen Hartman." *Okrönte härskarinnor på Stockholms slott*, Stockholm: Fritze, 232-249.

Lyttkens, Alice. 1977. *Leva om sitt liv: Minnen från sekelskiftet till 1920*. Stockholm: Bonniers.

Löfgren, Lars. 2003. *Svensk teater*. Stockholm: Natur och kultur.

Nead, Lynda. 1988. *Myths of Sexuality: Representation of Women in Victorian Britain*. Oxford: Blackwells.

Ohlsson, Hélène. 2016. "Pariafemininitetens återkomst: Diskurser om skådespelerskor runt sekelskiftet 1900.", *Lambda Nordica Queering femininity*, volume 21 1-2. 80-106.

Olofsson, Per Rune. 1987. *En kung i varje tum*. Höganäs: Bra bok.

Schippers, Mimi. 2007. "Recovering the Feminine Other: Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Hegemony." *Theory and Society* 36:1, 85–102. DOI: 10.1007/s11186-007-9022-4.

s.n., *Dagen* 23.05.1898, KB.

s.n., "Ellen Hartmans rentrée." *Borås Tidning*. 23.04.1892, KB.

s.n., 1934. "Ellen Hartman Sans-Gêne berättar: En serie artiklar i Vecko-Journalen om gångna tiders stockholmska kultur och teatervärld." *Vecko-Journalen*, nr. 14, KB.

Straub, Kristina. 1992. *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Sundberg, Ulf. 2004. *Kungliga släktband: kungar, drottningar, frillor och deras barn*. Lund: Historiska media.

Tjeder, David. 2003. *The Power of Character: Middle-class Masculinities, 1800-1900*. Univ., Diss. Stockholm Univ.

Torsslow, Stig. 1975. *Dramatenaktörernas republik: Dramatiska teatern under associationstiden 1888-1907*. Stockholm: Dramatiska teatern.

Wikipedia. *Oscar II*. Permanent URL: [//sv.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Oscar_II&oldid=42120876](https://sv.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Oscar_II&oldid=42120876)

ARCHIVES

Bernadottska arkivet (BFA), Stockholm, Oscar II:s arkiv Nr. 52:

Letters from Henriette Coyet to Oscar II, 16.06.1897, 22.06.1897, 24.05.1899, 28.10.1902.

Riksarkivet i Lund (LLA), Torups godsarkiv,

Letters from Oscar II to Henriette Coyet, 16.06.1897, 22.06.1897, 12.05.1898, 24.05.1898, 18.12.1898, 24.12.1898, Henriette Coyets korrespondens, 1896-1941, F 4: 15.

Letter from Claes Cederström to Henriette Coyet, 20.05.1898. Henriette Coyets korrespondens 1894-1934, F 4. 3,

Letter from Ellen Hartman to Henriette Coyet, 22.06.1920. Henriette Coyets korrespondens, 1901-1931, F 4: 9.

Riksarkivet i Stockholm (RA), Clarence von Rosens arkiv, Clarence von Rosens mormor Clara Jessup Moore 3c: 13, letter from Clarence von Rosen to Clara Jessup Moore 21.06.1891.

Kungliga Biblioteket (KB), *Borås tidning*, *Dagen*, *Vecko-Journalen*.

AUTHOR

Hélène Ohlsson is an actress, director, and scriptwriter who, since 2012, is a PhD Candidate in Performance and Theatre Studies at the Department of Culture and Aesthetics at Stockholm University. Her research focuses are divas, historical actresses, the long nineteenth century, and critical femininity studies. Her dissertation about actress Ellen Hartman is scheduled to be finished during the spring of 2018. Hélène Ohlsson was educated as a performer at École Jacques Lecoq in Paris. She has also been active as a drama teacher and dramaturge.