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Extended abstract:

WOMEN'S MAGAZINES: A RESEARCH TOPIC

Abstract (revised, June 2013): *Dom över död man* (eng. *Doom over dead man*; 2012) the award-winning Swedish-Norwegian film about Torgny Segerstedt, directed by Jan Troell, raises the question about the Swedish resistance against Nazism during the thirties. Torgny Segerstedt, editor of *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfarts tidning* GHT, (1872-1973) during World War II, has been praised for its defence of free speech. Another critical voice, although not as well known, came from the editor Kaj Andersson in the Socialdemokratiska kvinnoförbundets, SSKF monthly magazine *Morgonbris* (1904- --). She used the modern photography and photomontage as a rhetorical weapon in the anti-fascist criticism as well as in supporting the modern welfare state. She arranged a consumer campaign to modernize the Swedish homes and stimulate consumption. A comparison with an American dito is discussed. Studies of how women communicated politics via their magazines may bring new aspects of twentieth century publicity, thus a call is made for a more comprehensive study of research. A first step would be to scrutinize the various genre names in the archives and bibliographies, which obscures the field.

Key words: Thirties, anti-nazism, consumer campaign, genres.

Introduction

The relative absence of research on women's political magazines among media scholars in Sweden is tentatively discussed in this extended abstract¹. Women's magazines in general have not so far been a hot topic among Swedish scholars. One reason could be that they are not in any obvious way regarded as strategic gateways to public opinion

¹ This text is partly a revised version of "Fotomontaget som politiskt vapen: Kaj Andersson I trettioalets Morgonbris", *150 år av kvinnotidskrifter*, Gidlunds förlag, forthcoming.

even though they lead straight into the kitchen tables and the family discussions, right into the heart of the families, where much of the political and ideological positions are established. Much attention has been paid to the public sphere, *das öffentlichkeit*, less to the private domain.

Initially is a brief description of the research field, women's magazines. A couple of examples are given of women's magazines relevance as historical sources which justifies a major research interest. At first, there is a brief description of how the editor Kaj Andersson, as well as Segerstedt, used her publication as a platform for anti-fascist critique. A brief description then follows of how the newspaper *Morgonbris* [eng. *Morning Breeze*] that Andersson was the editor for, a few years in the thirties, and the American magazine *The Delineator*, were used in domestic, consumerist, campaigns. Both topics are of scholarly relevance as vehicles of political opinions.

The paper is completed with an estimate of international research on women's magazines, which calls for a more comprehensive study of research. A first step would be to bring order to the various genre names in the archives and bibliographies, which obscures the field.

A political platform

When Torgny Segerstedt published his rude comment in *GHT* regarding the newly appointed chancellor of Germany, mister Adolf Hitler, it attracted attention not only in the Swedish press. After the conclusion of an article with the words "To force all the world's politics and the press to engage in the figure, it is inexcusable. Herr Hitler is an insult."², Göring himself wrote to the management of *GHT* and demanded that they would intervene against the outspoken editor.

In the unclear atmosphere that dominated the Swedish press at that time,³ the editor Kaj Andersson did not hesitate to challenge the nazi-friendly trends that after all existed in Sweden.⁴ Although most of the press was suspicious towards the nazis, there was no unambiguous opposition.

² "Att tvinga all världens politik och press att sysselsätta sig med den figuren, det är oförlåtligt. Herr Hitler är en förolämpning." *GHT*, 3 February, 1933.

³ Jonsson, Bibi, *Bruna pennor: Nazistiska motiv i svenska kvinnors litteratur* (eng. *Brown Pencils: Nazi motifs in Swedish Women literature*), Carlssons 2012, s. 192 ff.

⁴ Ekstrand, Eva, *Kaj Anderssons Morgonbris: kvinnopress, trettioal och längtan efter fri tid*, DISS, Umeå universitet, 2007, s. 56 ff.

In the hands of her, the Swedish Social Democratic Women organization's monthly magazine *Morgonbris* had turned out to be an outstanding modernist magazine, which eventually also attracted the Social Democratic Party. They made an effort to take over and make it the parent organization's regular magazine and political platform, an offer which however was rejected by the women association.

Kaj Andersson had made a visit to the Social Democratic women magazine *Frauenwelt*, in the Berlin editorial office, in January the same year as Segerstedt wrote his column. She experienced a tense and nervous situation in the newsroom, which she described in an article in the March edition of *Morgonbris* 1933.

On the outskirts of Berlin, outside the newspaper's local editorial, one find teams of workers who discuss last night's murder. Right in the street, four o'clock in the morning, a worker for reasons unknown was shot down by a Nazi. / ... / It is in Reinickendorff, Berlin's poorest districts. / ... /. We pay attention and step into the little bald newspaper office, where Marx familiar image greets us on the wall ... /.⁵

And she continues

Greet the comrades in Sweden that we do not let them subdue us. -But is there enough money in the cash box so that you would dare to risk a general strike? No not strike. / ... / But there's another way out. - A few seconds of eloquent silence, glances exchanged. - But - weapons? - Well, that sort of comment you don't talk about, but they could be found- and with a bitter smile - maybe those nazi keep hidden ...⁶

The article is illustrated with a grinning skull, a photomontage with the text "The true face of the nazis". Later that year, in the August edition 1933, the front page is a photomontage where the message "Unser glaube sind gewehre" in a (my free) translation becomes "we put our trust in guns," which can be comprehended as a further comment to the March article. It would be going too far to say that *Morgonbris* was a threat or that the magazine seriously challenged the nazis, but the writings are interesting enough for doing research on the anti-nazi and anti-fascist tendencies that appeared in women's press. Kaj Andersson herself put us on the trail in another article

⁵ 'Female bravery in a mutually warring nation' [Kvinnlig tapperhet i en inbördes stridande nation], *Morgonbris*, March 1933.

⁶ Ibid.

Toveritar in Finland, Frauenrecht in Schweiz, The Labour Woman in England, La Femme Socialiste in Frankrike, Die Frau in Austria and Arbeider-Kvinnen in Norway. Die Genossin is /.../ the German comrades information sheet. Like Frauenwelt /.../ it has been destroyed by the German nazi-regime...⁷

The history of these magazines are still to be told. A review of the European women's magazines in the first half of the twentieth century would throw light on the press landscape and add another –female or gendered- aspect of opinion formation, or lack thereof, during the thirties and forties.

A modern mission

Kaj Andersson did not only use the magazine as a platform and arena for political standpoints, she also turned it into a vehicle of ideological propaganda in a novel and at the time completely unexpected way, at least in Sweden. Whether she was influenced by an american editor of the women magazine *The Delineator*, Mrs. Marie M. Meloney, is impossible to say, but there are many similarities in how they practiced active journalism in the two campaigns *Fabrikernas bästa till hemmens behov* (eng. *Factorie's best for home needs*) and *Better Homes in America*.⁸ The former campaign took place in the *Morgonbris* magazine during a year and a half, 1935-1936. Its goal was to modernize the Swedish homes and educate the Swedish housewives to become better skilled consumers.

She orchestrated the campaign by publishing a catalog of products in the magazine, as an attachment, and thus giving prominence to household items that were of the best quality on the market. Also, in cooperation with various parties around the country, she promoted the campaign in various events. Housewomen associations and clubs along with factory owners and manufacturers of housewares were acting jointly. She arranged demonstrations of manufacturing processes and contests in household tasks, such as dinner tables, recipes etcetera. She had this idea of making the women well educated in

⁷ 'The chain of sisterhood' [Systerkedjan], *Morgonbris*, August 1933.

⁸ Ekstrand, Eva, 'En jämförelse mellan 30-talskampanjerna *Fabrikernas bästa för hemmens behov* och *Better Homes in America*', [A comparison of the 30's campaigns 'Factorie's best for home needs' and 'Better Homes in America'] Nordiska konferensen för medie- och kommunikationsforskning 15, Reykjavik 11-13 augusti 2001.

quality matters and through their acting on the market by choosing the “right” items, they would make a difference, thus the women would affect the industry production in the right direction. The feminist historian Yvonne Hirdman has called this period in *Morgonbris* “the ideological attempt”⁹.

On the other side of the Atlantic the American magazine *The Delineator* had launched the campaign Better Homes in America thirteen years earlier, in 1922. On the surface, the Swedish and the American campaign resembled each other, but the way the two campaigns were received by the establishment can't be compared. Kaj Andersson had to resign the year after the campaign was launched after heavy critique in the SSKF congress 1936, while the U.S. government embraced the Better Homes in America campaign as a means to foster the Americans into a mass consumer economy.

Ideologically the Swedish and the American campaign were completely opposite. Kaj Andersson had a socialist agenda while Maloney's magazine celebrated American patriotism. The common message was however to develop people's characters and turn domestic women into quality-conscious consumers.

The most important aim of Better Homes in America and of all local campaigns is to promote the study of character-building in the home. We are all interested in houses, furnishings, and environment, but principally because good surroundings make for happier home life and in wholesome conditions there is greater opportunity for pursuing the main goal of life--the development of character. The emphasis of the whole campaign should be upon this subject. The Committee should have in mind the influence of the home upon the individual in planning every detail of the campaign.¹⁰

The president, Warren G. Harding as well as the Secretary of Commerce, Herbert Hoover was the first in a long line of prominent people within the U.S. administration to support and promote the campaign. Not the least Eleanor D. Roosevelt should be mentioned, as she was the official patroness of the movement. Twenty-one of the Pan-American States had asked for help with introducing the movement in their countries, Maloney wrote in an issue of *The Delineator* 1923 and the household economist van Rensselaer had traveled to Belgium to help with the planning. Hence, the campaign had spread overseas.

⁹ Hirdman, Yvonne, *Att lägga livet tillräta-studier i svensk folkhemspolitik*, Stockholm: Carlsson, 1989.

¹⁰ The Library of Congress, US. Publication [Nos. 11-12]/ issued by Better Homes in America; [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/coolbib:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(amrlg+lg58\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/coolbib:@field(NUMBER+@band(amrlg+lg58)))

What significance the women's magazines have had for spreading of the political ideologies, that has come through the back door is an interesting scholarly task. The said campaign, Better Homes in America, would in that respect be a case for further study. The overarching question is what influence women's magazines have had on politics. The first task however would be to get an overview of the European women's magazines and to make an appropriate definition of the magazines which can be assumed to have had influence at all. Not only in the public debate, but in the private conversations, over the kitchen tables, in the heart of the family life.

Swedish research on women's political magazines

The women's political magazines are often used as sources in different research projects, more rarely as a research object in itself, e.g. within the media and communication studies in Sweden women's magazines is not a major research topic¹¹. One should primarily turn to comparative literature to get inputs. The story behind *Tidskrift för hemmet, tillegnad den svenska qvinnan*, (eng. Journal of the home, dedicated to the Swedish women; 1859-1885) which is regarded as the first women's magazine in the Nordic countries¹², has been brought forth by the literature researcher Anna Nordenstam in *Begynnelse: litteraturforskningens pionjärvinnor 1850-1930*¹³ (eng. Beginnings: the pioneer women in literature research, 1850-1930). Her book is in this respect an indispensable reference point.

The historian René Frangeurs has written on the status of women in the labor market in *Yrkeskvinna eller maktens tjänarinna* (eng. Professional Woman or Spouse's handmaiden, 1998), where the right to work during the thirties is the central issue, but she also examines to some extent the source itself, in that she recognizes who were the *Morgonbris* female writers and in what other press they were published.

In a social history study of sexual politics by Hjördis Levin¹⁴, also in the 30s, the magazine *Tidevarvet* (1923-1936) is an important source and in Ulla Manns dissertation

¹¹ In this paper I do not take into account works of Gullan Sköld and Lisbeth Larsson, as their point of interest mainly concerns reading of popular weekly magazines.

¹² KvinnSam, Göteborgs universitetsbibliotek.

¹³ Nordenstam, Anna, *Begynnelse: litteraturforskningens pionjärvinnor 1850-1930*, [Ny utg.], B. Östlings bokförl. Symposion, Eslöv, 2001

¹⁴ Levin, Hjördis, *Kvinnorna på barrikaden, Socialpolitik och sociala frågor 1923-1936*, Stockholm: Carlsson, 1997.

Den sanna frigörelsen (The true liberation; 1997) the magazines *Dagny* and *Hertha* are primary sources. Not to mention Yvonne Hirdmans extensive production of women's history in which she consistently uses *Morgonbris* as a reference and source. Gunnel Karlsson's historical treatise *Från broderskap till systerskap* (eng. From brotherhood to sisterhood; 1996), should also be mentioned. In all the aforementioned cases, the magazines are inextricably linked with the political unions history and the development of women's political issues. Less commonly, the relationship between the organizational context, i.e. the unions, and the journalistic independence, is examined.

One exception is Patrik Åker in the media and communication dissertation about the magazine *Vår Bostad* (Our Home; 1998). It was not a woman's magazine, but it may well be mentioned in this context, as he explores the relationships between the home, which was still a woman's territory, society and journalism, and he notes that journalism was not only a reflection of the events during the thirties, but also an actor in the creation of the ideal-typical home.

International research in the field

Periodical publications with female or feminist prefixes have been published since the 1700s in Sweden, albeit on a limited scale. Margaret Berger makes a comparison with the UK, Germany and France, in *Äntligen ord från kvinnohopen!*¹⁵ (eng. At last, words also from the women; 1984) and notes that women began to write about the same time in Europe, but that developments in Sweden were slightly slower. A comprehensive overview of the Swedish development is still waiting to be written.

The feminist journals and their historical significance is a growing area of research internationally, at least when it comes to its impact on women's political, civil rights and twentieth-century modernization processes and social issues. Even female writers, editors and writers, subcultures formed around the magazines and their readers, has attracted interest¹⁶, as well as different methodological approaches¹⁷. The journals,

¹⁵ Berger, Margareta, *Äntligen ord från kvinnohopen! : At last, words also from the women : om kvinnopress under 1700-talet*, Akademilitt., Stockholm, 1984.

¹⁶ Green, Barbara, *The Feminist Periodical Press: Women, Periodical Studies, and Modernity*. *Literature Compass* 6/1 2009, pp. 191-205.

¹⁷ DiCenzo, Maria, "Feminist media and history: a response to James Curran", *Media History*, 2004, Vol 10, No 1, pp 43-49.

regarded as counter-public or alternative public spheres and the importance of access to the bourgeois public sphere for women's identity are recurring issues¹⁸.

In a special issue of the journal *Media History*, from 2000, there are valuable data on the wide field "womens's magazines." Maria DiCenzo discuss for example how the journal *Votes for women* played an important role in the fight for suffrage in England, both in lobbying and as a forum within the movement¹⁹. Another theme, except the right to vote, is the criticism of the strong commercialization of women's magazines in general. The advertising and ads in itself is a message to the readers, Nancy A Walker writes in the same issue of *Media History*²⁰ and points at the debate and criticism of the strong commercialization. This kind of criticism is what Kaj Andersson wanted to beat by including the catalog with good quality goods in 1935 in *Morgonbris*. The ads was not primarily there for commerce, but for the education of women's taste (!).

David Doughan and Denise Sanchez has listed titles in an oft-quoted bibliography of British, Irish and international feminist journals: *Feminist Periodicals 1855-1984*.²¹ The first ten years there were on average two titles listed each year and up to the turn of the century, there was a steady increase until 1984 when the peak was over four hundred titles, most of which, however, ceased after a short period. The figures should not be compared with the Swedish situation. The difficulty in comparing with foreign relations is not only that the Swedish release was sparse. There is also the issue of different genre designations in the journal field, that can both promote inclusions and exclusions.

Genre confusion

As an example of excluding genres, in the Swedish library database Libris, the magazine *Morgonbris* occurs in six different subject headings and genre designations: Women's Union, Sweden's Social Democratic Women, Working Women political activity Sweden,

¹⁸ Leonor Camaüer, *Feminism, Citizenship and the Media. An ethnographic study of identity processes within four women's associations*. Diss. Stockholm University, Sweden, 2000.

¹⁹ DiCenzo, Maria, "Militant Distribution: Votes for Women and the public sphere" *Media History* 2/2000.

²⁰ Walker, Nancy A., "Ladies Home Journal 'How America Lives' and the Limits of Cultural Diversity" *Media History*, 2/2000.

²¹ Doughan, David & Denise Sanchez, *Feminist periodicals, 1855-1984: an annotated critical bibliography of British, Irish, Commonwealth and international titles*, Harvester, Brighton, 1987.

Women's Movement Sweden, Labor Union Press and Political Party Press²². It unequivocally creates a lot of work for the researcher and require great thoroughness.

In the Doughtan & Sanchez bibliography, on the other hand, all journals were included if the magazine have sought to improve women's social, legal and economic situation in relation to men. However, they also included journals that have had the objective to oppose the feminist movement. It severely hampers any attempt to categorize and distinguish magazines with a defined political message, if everything should be included, indiscriminately.

An example of the opposite, how an exclusive and discriminating genre designation risks implications for the feminist magazine provenience in Sweden, is *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift* (1980-2006), now *Journal of Gender Studies* (2006- --). The library database Libris places the former in the genre of scientific journal while the latter has been determined both as a scientific journal and cultural magazine. None of the titles show up, however, in the genre name "Women's Movement periodicals" in Swedish. The genre classification means that the library has, consciously or unconsciously, made an ideological distinction between the women's movement and - research. However, none of the mentioned periodicals had probably existed, had it not been for the Women's Movement. Especially not the magazines within the realm of academia.

A similar comprehensive, Swedish overview on par with the UK, would initially require delving into archives and libraries in the search for common denominators. Journals with a feminist or gender prefix that have been open for public debate and freedom of opinion are not usual, neither in Sweden or elsewhere, although they exist. They have been relatively few, but influential, and aimed at both men and women. They do not automatically assume that the feminist message is shared by readers, cf *Time and Tide* (1920 -) which was initially considered to represent liberal feminism but since 1984 have been published as a political magazine with no connection to feminism.

It may be noted that during Kaj Andersson's editorship in *Morgonbris*, there was an attempt to a free debate, not only social democratic advocacy. Kaj Andersson would probably place *Morgonbris* into the former category, a magazine for free debate.

²² Kvinnornas fackförbund, periodica, Sveriges socialdemokratiska kvinnoförbund periodika, Arbetarkvinnor politisk verksamhet Sverige periodika, Kvinnorörelsen Sverige periodika, Fackförbundspress samt Partipress

Basically, she rejected separate organizations for men and women, but that did not stop her from going to another organization magazine with explicit female political overtones after the war, namely *Hertha*, where she appeared from 1948 to 1957. For her, the main political message was social democratic politics. She was strongly influenced by Hjalmar Branting who had hired her 1915 as a volunteer at the newspaper *Social Demokraten* where she learned to be a professional journalist and eventually known as one of contemporary personalities in the press.²³

Finally, a call for research on women's political press and magazines, could bring new aspects of twentieth century publicity, which can be discovered by studying how women communicated politics via their magazines. In this abstract there are two topics suggested, the nazi critique and american influences of the commercialisation of the domestic life, as a means to create the mass consumer economy. To be continued.

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²³ Hultén, Britt, *Kulturtidskrifter på 30-talet: Nordeuropa, Ateneum, Fronten*, 1. uppl., Cavefors, Diss. Stockholm : Univ.,1977.

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