

**“Han Skulle Vara En Kille Som
Pappa Inte Kunde Klaga På”:**

**Subversive And Imaginative Masculinity In Lygia
Bojunga’s Work**

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Magisteruppsats 30 hp

Litteraturvetenskap | Hösttermin 2017



SÖDERTÖRNS HÖGSKOLA | STOCKHOLM
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ABSTRACT

This thesis centers on three children's novel, "Sex gånger Lucas", "Min Vän målaren", and "Den gula väskan", written by the very appreciated and much awarded Brazilian Author Lygia Bojunga. All three of these novels discuss masculinity in young boys and men. In "Sex gånger Lucas", the centerpiece of this thesis, the essential conflict in the novel is played out in the interchange between Lucas and his authoritarian father. The father, throughout the text, showcases toxic masculinity and its concurrent traits, such as verbal abuse and serial infidelity. This tyrannical parenting attempts to mold Lucas' personality to what is deemed in the culture as acceptable masculine behavior. Lucas's narrative journey finds him firstly internalizing this belief system, but, as the novel progresses, Lucas learns to accept himself, in all his gendered guises, and reject the father's binary opinions. "Min vän målaren" follows the tale of the sensitive young boy, Claudio, who struggles against an environment that doesn't support him, in his many and varied attempts towards personhood. In "Den gula väskan" the protagonist Rakel confronts an open and oppressive sexism in society, community and the many dismissals of the family. "Den gula väskan" utilizes, at many junctures of the narrative, a fable structure as a means to discuss political oppression as well as the oppressive binary masculine norms. This Fable sub-tale focuses on the character Alfonso, a talking rooster. Alfonso rejects the expectations put on him as a rooster, but his cousin Skräcken is not as fortunate. The cousin, who it is heavily implied is the victim of masculine brainwashing, is unable to stop himself from fighting, even when it ends up killing him. Throughout these three novels lies an illustration of the downfalls of an oppressive and toxic masculinity (that men must be stoic, aggressive and in control) as well as highlighting the freedom for a more fluid gender expression. Lucas, Claudio and Alfonso give subversive, alternative depictions of masculinity, where it is acceptable to feel, be vulnerable, reject violence, and have healthy relationships built on companionship. This thesis explores how Bojunga's novels, through her characters struggles and triumphs, give the young male identified readers alternative ways to be a man. In other words, these novels liberate the male gender from a binary performance.

Keywords:

Masculinity, Gender, Children's Literature, Lygia Bojunga, Stephen M. Whitehead, Fable, Machismo, Patriarchy

SAMMANFATTNING

Denna avhandling bygger på tre barnromaner, "Sex Times Lucas", "Min Vän målaren" och "Den gula väskan", skriven av den uppskattade och prisbelönta brasilianska författaren Lygia Bojunga. Alla tre av dessa romaner diskuterar maskulinitet i relation till unga pojkar och män. I "Sex Times Lucas", den centrala verket i denna avhandling, är konflikten mellan Lucas och hans auktoritära far det centrala handlingen. Faderns beteende genom hela romanen skildrar en obehaglig uppfattning av maskulinitet, med att psykisk misshandla Lucas and vara ständigt otrogen mot modern. Genom hans tyranniska föräldraskap försöker han att forma Lucas' personlighet till vad han anser acceptabelt maskulint beteende. Lucas först internaliserar dessa normer, men sen genom romanens växling lär Lucas att acceptera sig själv som han är och avvisar faderns översträngda idéer om manlighet.

"Min vän målaren" visar en känslig ung pojke, Claudio, som kämpar mot en miljö som inte stöder honom. Trots detta motstånd försöker han inte förändra sig själv.

I "Den gula väskan" diskuterar Rakel öppet sexismen som hon möter. Boken använder också fabel som ett medel för att diskutera politisk förtryck samt strängda genus normer genom Alfonso, en talande tupp. Alfonso går emot vad man förväntar av honom som tupp, men hans kusin Skräcken däremot går med på förväntningarna. Kusinen, som det är starkt underförstått, är offer för hjärntvätt, kan inte stoppa sig från att slåss, och tillslut dör på frund av det.

I alla dessa tre romaner ligger en gestaltning av en kritik mot manlighetsnormer (att män får inte visa känslor, vara aggressiva och dominanta) samt framhävda friheten för ett mer flytande könsuttryck. Lucas, Claudio och Alfonso ger subversiva, alternativa skildringar av maskulinitet, där det är acceptabelt att känna, vara sårbar, avvisa sig från våld och ha jämställda relationer byggt på vänskap. Denna avhandling forskar i hur romanen, genom att skildra dessa karaktärer och deras kamp och seger, ger de unga pojk-identifieranda läsare alternativa sätt att vara en man. Med andra ord befriar dessa romaner det manliga könet från en binära normer.

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1. Introduction

A. Recognition and Biography

Lygia Bojunga is the author of *Several Children's Novels*. Her body of work has led to her winning both the Hans Christian Anderson Award in 1982 and The Astrid Lindgren Memorial Prize in 2004. The Jury's stated motivation for granting this highly respected award to the work of Bojunga was:

Lygia Bojunga dissolves the boundaries between fantasy and reality with all the exhilarating ease of a child at play. In her dramatic and word of mouth-style narratives the reader is always enabled to enter directly into the dreams and fantasies that her principal characters draw on for survival. In a deeply original way she fuses playfulness, poetic beauty and absurd humour with social critique, a love of freedom and a strong empathy with the vulnerable child.¹

Bojunga was born 1932 in Pelotas, Brazil. Starting out as an actress working both in Theatre and Television, Bojunga was triggered by this experience to produce a number of plays and prose works, and came to the notice of the public with her prose writing debut the 1972's novel "Os Colegos" ("Kompisarna", trans. 1986 by Opal förlag). This story was a fable infused tale utilizing talking animals as a stand-in for humans and their experiences. The fabulist mechanism of the articulating animal is a formulation common in Ms. Bojunga's earlier work and came to have interesting echoes in her later writings. As her body of work expanded, with a concurrent clarification of ideas and subjects, Bojunga's narrative saw sharper influences from quasi-realist fiction. The usage of these magical elements in the narrative form was utilized by her as a means to understandably explore the fluid elements of the space within the imagination of the child.

Her body of work has been praised worldwide for the political themes and social commentary, as well as in general touching upon subjects often deemed too upsetting for children's literature. It is her steadfast grip on the importance of the political imagination, and her reputation as a greatly innovative storyteller, that has led to her work being both praised internationally and translated into a slew of languages from the original Portuguese, including French, Spanish, German, Norwegian, Swedish, Hebrew, Italian, Bulgarian, Icelandic and Finnish.

¹ Alma, *Lygia Bojunga* : <http://www.alma.se/en/About-the-award/ALMA-10-years/Lygia-Bojunga/> [hämtad 2017-12-08]

Strangely enough, given the comprehensive nature of the languages in which Bojunga's texts can be found, only one of her works is available in English. Due to this odd circumstance the direct quotations and excerpts from Bojunga's novels, in this analysis of her work, will be from the Swedish translations and therefore, this exploration of Bojunga's texts will have to fully rely on these Swedish translations as provided.

B. Meaning

This thesis will primarily focus on the depiction of Masculinity as it is developed, displayed and critiqued in Bojunga's body of work. Specifically this analysis will center on the three following novels: "Sex gånger Lucas" (1996), "Min vän målaren" (1987) and "Den gula väskan" (1976) as its guide to her work. The male characters of these three novels all exhibit different forms of gender expression, displaying both toxic as well as non-conforming masculinity, which this thesis will attempt to showcase as extraordinary unique depictions of boys and men in Children's Literature. The ambition is to build upon previous discussions regarding Bojunga's body of work and gender, showing that she not only critiques sexism that emerges in the female characters lives and the toxic behavior of the male characters but also depicts men who face pressure in how to perform masculinity, and how they create their own spaces to be subversive in their gender performance.

C. Method and Previous Research

This thesis will rely on previous research regarding both Masculinity studies, as well as studies on Lygia Bojunga's body of work. Due to the novel's settings this thesis will also include studies and articles regarding gender and masculinity norms in Brazil. Important researchers here are Ying Toijer-Nilsson, Stephen M. Whitehead, Matthew C. Guitmann and Maria Nikolajeva. Maria Nikolajeva in the book "Power, Voice and Subjectivity in Literature" discusses Lygia Bojunga's impact on Children's literature in Brazil and worldwide. Bojunga in the text is compared to Ana Maria Machado, who is another worldwide acclaimed Brazilian author of Children's Literature. Both authors, according to Nikolajeva, showcase an empowering image of the child, who often is wiser than their peers. The child, according to her, is often the one who battles against oppressive adults and their rigid views, but finds a way to escape. Nikolajeva touches upon the issue of empowered girl characters, but does not discuss the gendered issues of boys. As the Alma-jury states, Bojunga's work illustrated issues seen as "taboo" in literature for younger readers and explore her political use of the magical realism genre towards this end.

Similar observations are argued for by Ying-Toijer Nilsson in her article "Lygia Bojunga Nunes" from the encyclopedia book "Författare & illustratörer för barn och ungdom porträtt på

svenska och utländska nutida författare och illustratörer 6, Mo-Pr”. Nilsson, like many other critics, compares Bojunga to Ana Maria Machado, linking them together within the tradition of magical realism and how this genre device became a means to depict, and critique, Brazilian culture. Nilsson elaborates on the narrative mechanism of magical realism developed by Bojunga is a means to delve into the issues of political oppression and brainwashing.

The political-gender conjunction will be a primary concern throughout this thesis and how Bojunga excavates and critiques the oppressive political and the repressive masculine ideals will be a large concern in this text.

Matthew C. Guittmann’s anthology essays ”Changing Masculinities in Latin America” will be used to provide cultural context to the theory. The essays and articles in the anthology discuss the ways men in Latin American deal with the masculine image and how masculinity has been expressed within the Latin America context. Guittmann surveys the struggles some men have with the norms surrounding gender and masculinity, and how many males are now confronting and beginning to change the masculine culture of the region. These segments are vital to understanding of the societal gendered expectations and how this is critically reflected upon in Bojunga’s work.

Stephen M. Whitehead does a collective study of masculinity studies in ”Men and Masculinities”. Whitehead’s book covers a wide range of feminist theory, philosophy and sociological studies centering specifically on gender and masculinities concerns. Whiteheads canny ability to make comprehensive summaries of Masculinity studies, as well his intersectional take on alternative constructions of masculinity, make his text interesting ground as a means to analyze the gender deconstruction and performance in Bojunga’s text.

An in-depth examination of ”Sex gånger Lucas”, ”Min vän målaren” and ”Den Gula Väskan” will be the methodological device to explore the feminist and sociological theorist ideas narratively embodied in Bojunga's text and how she utilizes them represent a new form of masculinity.

2. Patriarchy, Complicity of the Family, and the Realm of the Child

”Sex gånger Lucas” is divided into six chapters and the narrative formulation details the child Lucas living a life as the neglected, unseen, and outcast in a empty familial life as his father and mother live a life without a care for, or notice of the child. The novel focuses on the vulnerable 7-8 year old protagonist Lucas who suffers unrelenting and ruthless emotional abuse at the hands of his father. Whenever the reserved and lively Lucas interacts with his father, the consequences are an inevitable torrent of verbal abuse and cruel violence. Lucas lives in constant fear and in a perpetual

state of abandonment. The emptiness perpetuated by this vacant and vicious family life, leads Lucas to ask his father for a dog to accompany him in his solitary hours, much to the irritation of a father who prefers an invisible, unspeaking Lucas. Eventually the father relents, and snatches up a street dog to give to Lucas. Yet, as always is the case, in the logic of the abusive relationship, the irritable and cruel character of the father soon comes to the surface and, becoming frustrated with the dog, he one day flings it from a speeding car. The horror of this narrative picture painted by Bojunga is more than disquieting and, not surprisingly, as University professor Elina Druker notes, is a "scene that often sticks into the readers mind"².

The remainder of the novel follows a doubly wounded Lucas as he processes a resurgent loneliness now haunted by the grief of the loss of his pet. Seeking a modicum of solace in the mechanics of school and his art classes, Lucas, even here, is undermined when he comes to witness his father seduce his art teacher, whom Lucas has a precocious crush on. This final rupture produces in Lucas a, finally noticed, and grotesquely blooming, emotional hatred for his father. A hate which is both a relief and guilt inducing. With mounting disquiet and shame Lucas thinks to himself: "Han märkte att det var inte kul något mer att tycka om pappa"³.

Back in the lethal whirlwind of the family this marital betrayal with the teacher finally motivates the mother to a point where she can't tolerate the father's serial infidelity any longer (who has had a long string of affairs in addition to the art teacher of Lucas). The Mother separates from the father, but ultimately, in her abusively created weakness, returns to the dysfunctional marriage, despite Lucas pleading his mother not to. The novel ends with Lucas realizing that it is the destructive toxic behavior founded on a stringent patriarchic system, which his father embodies and which the females surrounding him continually normalize. This system, when operating within the family and running rampant through a society, becomes a perversion, not only of the familial, but of the human condition itself. This realization motives Lucas to discard his misplaced guilt and to acknowledge the inappropriate and horrendous behavior of the adults, the abusive patriarchy of the father and the enabling complicity of the mother, surrounding and intertwined with his life. In emotionally distancing himself from the adults and the maladies they harbor Lucas is able to grant himself the beginnings of a new freedom. Lucas, despite having few options in the systemic of the patriarchy and the familial relations which facilitate it, empowers himself with a dawning realization that it is not his duty to like his uncaring and unkind guardians, and through an

² Elina Druker, "*Multikulturell Barn-och-Ungdomslitteratur*" (From lecture; Institution for Culture and Estetics, Stockholm University, 2014)

³ Lygia Bojunga, *Sex gånger Lucas*, Translated by Sofia von Malmborg, (Finland: Opal 2004) p. 68

imaginary confrontation: “Det enda han sa till dem var: jag trodde att vuxna visste bättre”⁴ he comes to grasp this final freedom. A freedom which entails the liberation from the toxic masculinity of his father and a beginning independence beyond machismo.

In the character of Lucas, Bojunga begins an evaluation of the repressions of childhood under the patriarchy, which the Alma Jury has termed "the vulnerable child"⁵. For the Jury the concept of the vulnerable child entails one who, despite being rejected and mistreated inside of their own families, finds an inner, open space through the activity of play, and its surrounding stories and alternative pathways of life, to secure a different emotional place for themselves, outside of the rejections of the familial. In the three novels, chosen here to underline this possible open space, Bojunga cleaves close to a form of this thesis of empowerment as linked to play, but further, and beyond the Jury's analysis, Bojunga's narrative in these three texts details a subverting, gendering space created in play which creates a place for the child as a distinct and separate realm severing it from the space of the repressive, containing and ultimately abusive, patriarchy.

In this novel Lucas's vulnerability is manifested in neglect, mistreatment, belittlement and invisibility. This theme of vulnerability, the child who seeks the open space of play and utilizes this space as the means of coping with their impossible situation, is a recurrent and continuous thread throughout Bojunga's work which often is utilized to focus on children in similar situations. Children who are neglected, uncared for, constantly belittled, verbally or physically abused, find in Bojunga's work a place where, as the rules of play are an open and fluid (in counter-distinction to the closed and binary fields of the adult) field, define a place where children can maneuver to heal and cope.

“Sex gånger Lucas” serves, most strongly in the corpus of Bojunga's authorial production, as the center-point pivot for her narrative argument for a possibility of a released and flowing gender construction in the alternative narrative life of the child, created in play, which stands in anxious resistance to the constrained and contained patriarchy. The narrative device that Bojunga develops to this argument, that patriarchal behavior is a form of violence imposed by gendering containment, is to write sympathetic portraits of young boys who subvert gender norms, and critiques adults that show intolerance to alternative gender performance. “Sex gånger Lucas” critiques toxic masculinity (infidelity, selfishness and emotional abuse which is based on a gender normative binary language) and in her narrative story illustrates that boys don't have to convert to the overly narrow gender roles expected of them. A space is possible for more open gender production and Bojunga's children's narratives explicate a place in which this may occur.

⁴ Lygia Bojunga 2004 p. 76

⁵ Alma, *Lygia Bojunga*

”Min vän målaren” tells the story of a young boy named Claudio. The book is divided into nine chapters; all named after the days the chapters take place on. The book's plot takes place over the span of a week and a half period, beginning on “Friday” and ending on a Saturday. The novel's first chapter opens with Claudio describing his artist friend, a painter, in a first-person narrative, and meanders to the chapter's conclusion with Claudio admitting that he should use past tense when thinking of his painter friend since, it is revealed, the friend has committed suicide.

The remaining chapters of the novel chronicles the young Claudio's attempt to find a voice to speak of the tragedy of his friend's demise and to scrape a meaning from his friend's final and deadly act. His attempts to communicate his grief, his confusions and his attempts to understand are met with little success. Claudio efforts to enlist the aid of adults to help him comprehend what has occurred, and struggle to explain his grief to other children, garners him little progress. Both activities become fruitless efforts and lead to the emptiness of many silences. Throughout the novel the reader is clued into the painter's life and possible motives for his suicide with minimal pieces of information that we share with Claudio. These clues, presented as narrative circumstances, portray the many possible and complex things that may have lead to the man's suicide: political oppression, disillusionment in his own art and lost love. Discussions, clues and circumstances of the text lead not to certainty but to uncertainty. The silence that surrounds Claudio shows the melancholy truth that life is chaotic and does not have an answer. Life like gender does not fit into a binary.

Claudio's grief is always met without empathy or understanding, which is founded, cultivated and ultimately perverted by the distorting filter of masculinity and machismo norms which seeks an answer always certain and determined. The macho binary is continually without recourse to the totality of range of emotions of sadness which would be deemed soft and sentimental in the overly masculine. ”Min vän målaren” is the close examination of the mechanism of how masculinity, gender expression and grief entwine.

”Den gula väskan” is best understood as an possibility and elaboration of the concept of the fluid gendered male, which is a common and underlying subject in most of Bojunga's oeuvre. Out of Bojunga's production this is the novel that most forcefully and overtly discusses the details of the functions and hindrances of gender mechanics in the operations of childhood.

The main protagonist of ”Den gula väskan” is Rakel a young girl who is frequently neglected and belittled by her family due to her gender. Rakel's character arch is manifested in this narrative in expressions of frustration regarding the limitations of activities she's allowed to do based upon the operations and context of her gender (For example Rakel is prohibited from playing football).

Suppression of the female gender is detailed in Bojungas's narrative structure especially through narrative punctuations where Rakel's family obviously ignore, or even promote a male cousins vicious bullying of Rakel. At times this violent mobbing is encouraged too an extreme, and met with a dismissive silence when Rakel verbally requests aid from her elders and family. Bojunga's narrative constructs in Rakel a gendering which is exposed, through multiple experiences of sexual prejudice, to the knowledge that in male dominated society the female gender is to be seen as a second class human (below the male gender) and is therefore less worthy of respect than boys. Male privilege is so deeply rooted in her everyday life Rakel, who often knowingly wishes that she could be a male and therefore not have to deal with sexism and the oppressions of her gendering. What makes this depiction extraordinary is that Bojunga doesn't shy away from any intensity of sexism in her novel; she discusses it quite explicitly and the main protagonist, Rakel, lives knowing she is embedded in a massive and complete system of Gender Diaspora.

Lygia Bojunga in her Alma-website based interviews⁶ has said her works are meant specifically to tackle the myriad discriminations and oppressive experiences of being young and female. Bojunga's concern cuts deeply into looking at The Othering of women, the gender which is not to be seen and dismissed in continuous denials. Because of this, "Den gula väskan" is a keynote work as the protagonist in Rakel lives in an unambiguous network of oppressions and her characterization very explicitly discusses this issue and the plagued of gendered double standards that come with these plenitude of discriminations against the women of humanity.

Despite the protagonist (who also provides the book's narrative focal point) being female, Bojunga uses "Den gula väskan" to delve, as with her texts which have Male leads, into the question of the construction of masculinity. The analysis of male identity is founded, as per usual in Bojunga's oeuvre, on the manufacture of fable and magic realist formulae which gives Rakel a unconstrained world where she can openly reflect on societal injustice while simultaneously finding ways to empower herself outside of the supposed "realism" of the male dominated reality. This Fable structure is implemented in the novel through a parallel story lineage recounting an imaginary friend of Rakel's named Alfonso who is described as a talking rooster. Alfonso's first tale to the new friend Rakel tells the tale of his total resistance to becoming the single and controlling authoritarian King presence in the Hen-house he lived in. Alfonso has no desire to tell others how to live, how to behave, and how society should be organized. In rejecting this demand to control others Alfonso decided to leave the henhouse to give freedom to himself, as well as the confused others who asked for his control. Alfonso's presence to Rakel, along with his love interest (a living umbrella), are ambiguous inside of the novel's text, and often the narrative operates as if Alfonso

⁶ Alma, *Lygia Bojung*

was a real entity along with the human characters. This ambiguity is underscored as Rakel expresses a desire to become an author, making a subtle and vague claim of authorial realism for Alfonso's imaginary character. This double narrative motion operates to make Alfonso both a character in the story and as device for an inner dialogue founded on Rakel's loneliness and status as second class citizen. Alfonso represents the freedom to reclaim your own identity and the openness of multiple possibilities for gender which both authoritarianism and patriarchy will not allow to be verbalized or discussed. Alfonso, the umbrella, and other magical creatures that appear in "Den gula väskan", function as metaphors for real life problems, struggles and ultimately liberation from rigid rules.

A major turning point in the narrative development of the Fable-influenced Alfonso narrative in "Den gula väskan" follows Alfonso's and Rakel's attempts to prevent Alfonso's cousin, another rooster, from participating in a cock-fight (which the text makes clear will kill the rooster). In the first meeting that Rakel has with the cousin rooster, Alfonso is appalled when he sees the scars on the cousin, Skräcken, which indicate he has undergone surgery to his brain. Alfonso explains to Rakel that this surely means Skräcken has undergone brain surgery performed by humans to rearrange the rooster's brain so as to implant a compulsion to fight, regardless of self-preservation.

Ying Toijer-Nilsson and Lennart Kjerling⁷ read this plot point as a depiction of social brainwashing, showcasing the effects that totalitarian systems, and their ideology, have on the individual. Though this interpretation is assuredly correct on the social level of reading of behavior, this idea must be further elaborated into the interactions between the familial training of gender constructions and the capture of behavior and language which occurs there. The Family is where Rakel is being "trained" and propagandized to accept the classes and thinking of gender normative ideology. This ideology of gender order, learned at the Familial level, will be elaborated into the social as individuals leave the predominate interactions of the family for those of the social sphere. The gender-political is an interaction of authoritarian (societal) with the sexist (familial) and the determinate behaviors both demand an interchange with each other. The Tale then becomes both a political tragedy and a tragic portrayal of ideological brainwashing within the family. A tale which also houses a deconstruction of masculine norms and violence.

A major plot point in "Den Gula Väskan" is dedicated to Alfonso's journey within the landscape of his identity and his attempts to save his cousin from the cousin's own destructive behavior founded on individual decisions capitulating to patriarchal pressure. This narrative trajectory encapsulated in the parallel Alfonso story line can be read as Rakel's own imagination

⁷ Ying Toijer-Nilsson, "Lygia Bojunga Nunes" In *Författare & illustratörer för barn och ungdom porträtt på svenska och utländska nutida författare och illustratörer* 6, Mo-Pr, (Lund: Tradera 2000) p. 181

responding to both conscious reflections and subconscious critiques of Toxic masculinity. From the embattled consciousness of a little girl, and therefore as the locale of an oppressed and marginalized individual, the Alfonso tale lays out problems that stem from enclosing masculinity which Rakel, together with her friend, resist through the creation of an world of more fluid, open rules. By using fable-like elements Bojunga opens a narrative space in which children, as readers, can learn to recognize and struggle against the deadly ideology and rigidly determinate state of the masculine as control.

At the novel's end Rakel stumbles across a family that also appear to exist merely in her imagination. Here is a commune of togetherness where family members all exchange chores and work together. This Open Family, outside of the hierarchy of patriarchy, is embraced and inspires both Rakel and Alfonso to grasp a new order of ideas where it is possible to live beyond binary roles and ultimately the narrative journey is resolved by discovering a family free of hierarchy and patriarchy.

Primary to the direction of Bojunga's work is a focus on the specificity of male gender performance and masculinity and its ramifications for gender development inside of an exclusionary patriarchal system. Especially, though not exclusively, Bojunga's works are concerned with the socio-political intersections of gendering in Brazilian society, and the determination and expression of gender roles in the family structure. Therefore, it is of the utmost of importance to look at the work of both generalized feminist thinking regarding gendering as well as the work done in Latin American in feminist studies to follow through a comprehensive elevation of the work of Bojunga and its concerns regarding the problematic construction of gendered identities in patriarchal societies.

Bojunga has specifically noted that the intention of her prose is meant to reflect the dual nature of the political/patriarchy and the gendering individual. Thinking of the political as well as the gendering in Bojunga's work we find the narratives as an entangled struggle of the tenets and actions of democracy with the empowerment and freeing of young girls. Since this gendering in the familial and political contexts affects us all, Ms. Bojunga's production includes not only a female selection of protagonists and characters but also young boys, and the young boy's behavior, but used in her texts as a means to critique, subvert, or avert the normalized narrative for young boys in society.

Given such articulated concerns it certainly sheds light on how Bojunga texts are meant to utilize the many male protagonists she crafts as a means to generate and encompass multiple and

fluid alternatives to common, normative masculine ideals through the narrative device of creating sympathetic spaces for boys and men who don't fit into the role expected of them.

The predominate place Bojunga gives to the narrative characters of Lucas, Alfonso and Claudio presents a open platform for the performance of their masculinities in ways that (in the novel's narration) are depicted as a unlocked, joyous, fluid healthy behavioral space, even as it is seen as unusual and threatening by the male dominate society. In all of the novels of Bojunga the male protagonists find the means to behave in a way unlike the other males in their environments. This behavior of Bojunga's protagonists examines a healthy masculinity: a rejection of violence and tyranny. This is not to say that the characters never do things coded as masculine, but that their exhibition of it is nuanced and non-oppressive. Lucas in his story rejects the adult's behavior as the only option, and himself opts out for a more creative, playful expression of his masculinity. He expresses emotions outside of anger; he lets himself explore his identity in his art and daydreaming and rejects the destructive behavior of his parents. Like Claudio, Lucas creates his own space for his own expression. Bojunga cleverly uses in her novels children's active imagination and ability to play as a means of empowering her characters, showing the strength in children.

Even with the animal familiar Alfonso, a probably imaginary rooster friend, in whom Bojunga depicts a more "traditional" idea of masculinity, a rooster who wants to be a hero and speaks in a gruff manner, a subversion of expectations is operated upon the containments of a singular male identity. Alfonso is anti-violence and anti-tyranny. Alfonso's character arch is his desire to be a hero, which means he wishes to relate to his masculinity as kind and helpful instead of defined as the one who gives out orders. Alfonso also averts benevolent sexism by having true companionship with Rakel, showing his striving to heroism which isn't out of chauvinism (and in the case of Skräcken, not even gender specific), but of a nurturing kindness outside of male, authoritarian self-regard.

Bojunga's male centered narratives, highlighted in the most powerful way in her narrative of "Den gula väskan", "Sex gånger Lucas" and "Min vän målaren", exhibits to the reader a male protagonist of surprising depth who struggle to formulate, create and perform their own, and open, version of masculinity, despite their less than constructive or supportive environments. The protagonists of Bojunga's novels find themselves not through the binary simplicity of the gendered and normative roles imposed upon them, but through rejecting abuse, suppression, and persisting with their own versions to find the truth of the body and its gendering. Lygia Bojunga's narrative males find a space to illustrate the power of subverting and averting machismo, giving readers an alternative way to perform their masculinity and gender. This is in no small part helped by the

magical elements in Lygia Bojunga's novels. The open field of gender is a magical realism in itself. A change into the Other which is Myself.

3. The Concept of Machismo and the Latin American Context

As with many socio-political terms, machismo entails many complex ideas in Latin American culture. Primary to the direction of Bojunga's work is a focus on the specificity of male gender performance, masculinity, and its ramifications for gender development inside of an exclusionary patriarchal system. Especially important to Bojunga's work is a concern and excavation of the socio-political intersections of machismo and gendering in Brazilian society, which are determinate to the expression of gender roles in the family structure. Given that Bojunga's text are set in Brazil (indeed, the politics of Brazil's struggle for democracy are present in both "Min vän målaren" and "Den Gula väskan") it is important to not overlook the books concern with the Latin American gaze including studies regarding the idea and politics of "Machismo".

Machismo is a concept in Latin American Culture that consists of an intersection of ideas and ideologies from the identity of "masculine pride", the concept of the male as economic main provider for a family (therefore domestic duties as unpaid are made invisible to providing), and performative image-idea of (as worded by scholar William Safire⁸) "the swaggering male; the trappings of manliness used to dominate women and keep them 'in their place.'" Latin American gender studies have recently used the term as encapsulating the societal gender norm of hyper masculinity in the South and Latin American context.

In varied cultural contexts machismo is a complex concept that is interpreted in different ways; for instance machismo is at times attributed to positive effects such as altruism under the umbrella of taking care of family members. Machismo has also been misused in certain western media (like the US). as Cristin Conger notes in the essay "Isn't he lovely: The Trouble with 'Machismo'"⁹ where American advertisements makes use of the machismo, to celebrate patriarchy, and calling for an imprint of a prescriptive normative gender expression:

⁸ William Safire, Safire's *New Political Dictionary: The Definitive Guide to the New Language of Politics*. (New York, Random House, 1993) P. 4-7

⁹ Cristen Couger, "Isn't He Lovely: The Trouble with "Machismo", Bitch Media, October 16, 2011: <https://www.bitchmedia.org/post/isnt-he-lovely-latino-men-as-machismo-monsters>[hämtad 2017-12-08]

By and large, Latino households tend to uphold more restrictive gender roles, and telenovelas often portray gay men as flamboyant, flouncy and effeminate. Theories for why these patriarchal patterns exist abound, including the influence of Catholicism, Spanish colonial conquest, and socio-economic inequity. The concept, however, operates on multiple levels, as a prescribing how males should act, how we reject alternative expressions of gender, how we give prejudiced readings to differing cultural males, etc.: “At the same time, to me, the findings offer tangible evidence the “Latino men as machismo” assumption misses the mark big time. Think about how often “machismo” pops up whenever we mention Latino masculinity. Or, put another way, what associations come to mind when we describe male behavior, regardless of the person in question’s ethnicity, as machismo?”¹⁰

Conger points out that the concept has become a biased description of Latin American men, containing them as much as being a container for references from its standpoint. Referring to studies conducted in the US, Conger notes:

Research on Latino masculinities also reveals that while characteristics associated with machismo exist within the diverse communities that comprise the Hispanic population, it isn’t the standard... Although Latino men’s socialization has traditionally incorporated patriarchal images of power, seduction, and domination and some machismo traits may be observed in Latino men in different degrees, this recognition need not embrace a grand narrative of machismo as the primary description of Latino men.¹¹

While this article specifically is in reference to Latino communities inside USA, much can be gleaned from the dual boundaries a macho acculturation entails.

Matthew C. Guttman in his introduction to “Changing men and masculinities in Latin America”, notes of gender roles, masculine ideology, and its relationship to machismo:

In both social and personal histories, what it means to be a man in Latin America can often best be appreciated in relationship to hegemonic masculinities in the region. The dominant male ideological expression of these hegemonic masculinities – for instance, homophobia,

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

machismo, and misogyny – is not simply individual expression of interpersonal relations in families and households but also pertain to the very foundations of gender inequalities within these societies....¹²

Hegemonic masculinity inside a Latin American context, for Guttman, bears on a multitude of the social and individual aspects of the culture: the distinct family unit, the larger social interaction, the singular interpersonal, etc. Hegemonic masculinity (as well as homosociality) can be seen as an encompassing singularity and unity under the ideology of the heteronormativity and is carried out by entering into the patriarchic language and the binary-normative grid imposed on conceptual thinking. Entering the social, i.e. becoming an adult, means embracing the discourse of patriarchy¹³. All the terms at this level (entering the social, becoming adult, the discourse of patriarchy) reduce to one another. The phrase *hegemonic masculinity* will be utilized to provide greater nuance to the varied expressions of the dominate male ideology and specifically how it relates to machismo. In particular this will be used to explore the "complex interplay between normative and practical manifestations of masculinity..."¹⁴. The dominant male ideology requires entering in the heteronormative language which views itself as unified and complete; the males are contained and required to enter into the center of the ideology, while the females are pushed aside and devalued. One core feature of this paternal ideology, and one reflected in the male-center and women-periphery, is the acceptance of the neutral male as superior and the rest (female and the non-binary identifying) as lesser.

Marina Braga, writing for Huffpost Brazil, when speaking of the struggles of the LGBTQ+ communities in Brazil, notes the necessity within the machismo culture of the region of avoidance of the female and the production of femininity: "For example, a man can be homosexual, but he can't identify himself with the feminine"¹⁵. She elaborates: "In the gay universe, being effeminate is a flaw... feminine gay men pretend they are deeply masculine, assuming a gender expression that doesn't fit them"¹⁶. Embedded in hegemonic masculinity, men are required – and it can be argued that this is the case regardless if the men identify as Straight, Gay or Bisexual –avoidance of anything coded as feminine.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ . "It is in *The name of the Father* that we must recognize the support of the symbolic function which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of the law". Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, (London, Routledge 1997) p. 67

¹⁴ Matthew C. Gutmann, (author & editor): *Changing Men and Masculinities in Latin America*, (Durham, Duke University Press, 2003) p. 59

¹⁵ Marina Braga, , "In Brazil's Macho Culture, Homophobia and Misogyny Are Intertwined", February 2016: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/frente-feminista-casperiana-lisandra/in-brazils-macho-culture-1_b_7139452.html [hämtad 2017-11-07] (Translated from Portugese, translator's name not given)

¹⁶ *Ibid*

Braga, looking to Brazilian Portuguese in light of the linguist entrance to patriarchal languages, writes: "... When you pay attention to the use of Brazilian Portuguese, where nouns and adjectives are either masculine or feminine, you notice the use of feminine-gendered words to diminish the target. In our society, which makes assumptions about gender based on genitalia alone..."¹⁷. Braga shows a clear case of gendered constriction through hegemonic language, and therefore determined actions, as heavily contained and locked in a violent¹⁸ binary. While Braga's article focuses primarily on men belonging to the LGBTQ+ community, it is easily noted that men of any orientation are caught in the language which places femininity as stigmatized and positioned either as the Other (outside) or on the lower register of the binary. Patriarchal language, and the activities associated and generated from it, place the feminine in a excluded position and require the masculine to reject any activity coded as the feminine quite absolutely. This rejection is obvious with Bojunga's two male characters, Lucas and Claudio. Lucas's father's tyrannical actions towards his son incorporate heavy elements of overt pressure requiring his son to abandon any sensitivity he expresses as being coded in the realm of the empathic or nurturing and therefore being intrinsically feminine. In the case of Claudio his behavior of expressing his emotional state (of grieving) is seen as "unusual" in manifesting publicly complex sensitive feelings, seen by the patriarchal gaze as "not manning up", provoking the response of rejection from his male associates. In both cases, Luca's father and Claudio's classmates, the males figures of the narrative have entered a patriarchy where they must reflect strongly modeled masculine characteristics from the language of the system and monitor themselves as well as others, whether male or female, for not fulfilling ideological requirements of machismo which reads a stringent regulation of the gendered normative. In both of these cases in Bojunga's narratives, emotional nuance and its social exposure are read as feminine. This stringent Patriarchal behavioral stance leads to these varied emotional states as being socially rejected, and seen as neither male nor accepted by the dominate ideology (as feminine), positioning them into a double-bind of rejection.

In Philippe Armand de Bonneval's article "Brazil's Stubborn Machismo"¹⁹ he speaks of a motto among Brazilians, "Ordem e Progresso"²⁰. This is translated as "order and progress", a term which is an official slogan of the Brazilian government to illustrate the country's ability to change

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ "in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a vis-a-vis, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand". (axiology, first of all, is to overturn theoretically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment. to overlook this phase of overturning is to forget the conflictual and subordinating structure of opposition." Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press 1972) p. 41

¹⁹ Philippe Armand de Bonneval, "Brazil's Stubborn Machismo", October 25, 2016,

<http://www.coha.org/brazils-stubborn-machismo/>, Council Of Hemispheric Affiars (COHA) [hämtad 2017-11-07]

²⁰ Ibid.

and strive for greatness. It is meant to be both a declaration of the country's character as well as a inspirational plan towards progress and striving towards the future. Armand de Bonneval discusses a skeptical view of this term: "Unfortunately, neither (order and progress) is entirely evident when it comes to social issues that exist there"²¹. For de Bonneval the social issue which is of paramount problematic for any social progress is equality. The context of this equality of Brazil resides mostly in gender parity becoming the touchstone for this achievement (or lack thereof): "The role of women in society has been undermined since the beginning of the twentieth century... and this situation does not seem to be improving"²². In agreement with Conger's²³ theory, de Bonneval attributes the stigmas attached to sexism, and aimed at women, to Catholic influences; something which is one likely contributor to overall sexist attitudes and their social manifestations²⁴.

Pondering the impact this has on social, hierarchical relations in Brazil and how it manifests itself in sexual inequalities in communities in general, Armand de Bonneval goes on: "This means that men are often portrayed as the cornerstone of the family, the providers of material security, whereas women need to take a step back."²⁵ However there is some variance to the arrangements of the social and gender as:

Nevertheless, the fact that former President Dilma Rousseff was a woman demonstrates that women can occupy positions of power... It seems, then, that perhaps what is stopping women from truly having an equal place in Brazilian public service is not access to Knowledge, but rather the culture in the country. A previous publication of the council on Hemispheric Affairs described the Machismo Paradox as 'Latin America's struggles with feminism and patriarchy.'²⁶

Despite women gaining more rights in Brazil, the standard normative behavior of the region still encompass a lower valuation generally of women, with most social matters entailing that women should rely "on support from the male establishment"²⁷. While some notable exceptions are evident, the pressure for women to be subordinate is still present and strong societal pressure is powerfully aligned per male dominance in the normative arrangement of familial relations and sexual hierarchies.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Cristen Couger, 2011

²⁴ . God, the father, and the hierarchy of the church, for example.

²⁵ Philippe Armand de Bonneval , 2016

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

Juliana Ganan, furthers this discussion of machismo in the South American to a working environment point of view. Ganan writes: "It's not just Brazil; machismo is entangled in society across South America, and many other places around the world"²⁸. Ganan speaks of her own personal struggles working in Brazil, in a working environment which calls for a level of individual activity and competency people often behaved "as if it were impossible for a woman to do all this on her own"²⁹. Ganan notes the sturdy binding of dominate male ideology and Brazilian culture: "Intersectionality demands that we look at society from all angles. Are issues of sexism and toxic masculinity important topics for those living in places like the United States? Of Course. But as a Brazilian woman and coffee professional, my experiences abroad have been far more positive..."³⁰. Her point is that sexism, assuredly, exists on a global scale, but sexual inequality, and the ideas circulating around it, has stronger manifestations in Brazilian culture. This impacts the placement and evaluations of different genders and how they find representation in the hierarchy, including where these differing genders can be located in community arrangements, jobs, etc. The characteristics of this aspect of normative thinking strictly associates and characteristics and attributes to each gender (being always the binary of the male dominate ideology which is placed in the outlining position of the lesser Other) specifying definite competencies inside of each gender. Ganan argues hegemonic masculinity is more fully operational in Brazilian culture and, therefore, more determinate in locations of individuals in the social dependent on gender.

Intersectionality is part of the methodology which Ganan uses. Being, herself, in a sphere of oppression, i.e. a woman, Ganan notes the intensities of oppression and recognizes the social formulations of this ideological subjugation more strongly in the Brazilian context. Her writings notes this fact and explores the exclusions from the dominate masculine ideology and pressures which become manifest upon members of the oppressed class of women. Intersectionality posits that societies have both Spheres of Oppressions and Spheres of Privilege³¹, but Ganan, notes even with an interpretation within intersectionality theory, machismo culture creates intensities upon women pushing them into spheres to which there appear to be only oppressions, while also rupturing the possibility of strengthening identity (complicit oppression). This intensity of oppression is one hallmark of overt machismo culture, which form women only as Other, as lacking, as absence. In this reading of Bojunga's work, the thesis will focus on the concept of

²⁸ Juliana Ganan, "Toxic Coffee Machismo Is Alive And Well In Brazil", May 25 2017: <http://sprudge.com/machismo-in-brazil-120334.html>[hämtad 2017-11-07]

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*, (New York, Routledge, 1990)

hegemonic masculinity as a means to connect both western and Latin American Masculinity studies.

5. In Solidarity with Children and the Space of Play

According to researcher Ying Toijer-Nilsson³², Brazilian Children's Literature was introduced to Sweden during the 1980's. Ana Maria Machado ("Sorgens ögon")³³, another worldwide acclaimed Brazilian author of children's books, and Lygia Bojunga ("Den gula väskan" and "Alexander och påfågeln") were simultaneously translated for the first time into Swedish during this period and were the first of their kind from the region. A notable clash occurred over these works as critics and the reading audience were not familiar to the tone and textures utilized in magical realist elements and concurrently with its usage in Children's Literature. In Toijer-Nilsson's words these works were read and "met with resistance"³⁴. According to Toijer-Nilsson the public was so indoctrinated to Anglo-literary traditions, in which fantasy elements usually incorporated portals that would transport children into magical worlds separate from the mundane world in which we live, that the difference of Lygia Bojunga's books, where magical elements played out in the everyday life and in the normal living mechanics of an ordinary Brazil, caused major consternation to the reading public. What bothered the reader regarding this literary tradition, and as Toijer-Nilsson notes in quoting Bojunga regarding her work: "It's a question of surrealist and absurd literature."³⁵ What perplexed the audience, and as Ms. Bojunga noted about her work, was a close embrace between surrealism and absurdity in her literature which reflected not the fantastic, but the daily activities of the absurd which permeated the real of Brazilian life. This absurdity was reflected not in grammatical or fantastic worlds but in the divide between rich and poor, between the slum areas and rich areas. This horror of the uneven, the unequal, and the other is itself the peculiar and surreal existence.

This absurdity was also reflected in the oddly precise audience given to this literature - the invisibility and lack of attention which children's literature set itself up for in the masculine inclined hierarchy of modern Brazil. Bojunga has noted in several interviews that writing social commentary into the structure of her Children's books was a very successful move in order to have her voice heard and to explore themes which would may have faced censorship in an adult reading

³² Toijer-Nilsson, Ying, 2000 p. 181

³³ Ana Maria Machado, *Sorgens ögon*, Translated by Kajsa Pehrsson (Uppsala, Gidlunds 1983)

³⁴ Toijer-Nilsson, Ying, 2000 p. 179

³⁵ Ibid.

community³⁶. Bojunga's social commentary came to have a strong impact on Brazilian society, and her critiques of Brazilian political and social institutions easily passed through the nets of censorship, which they would have assuredly been ensnared in, if they had not been written, and seen, as children's stories. Books aimed at a younger audience were many times less likely to be censored compared to the literature aimed at adults. The themes and issues confronted in the children's books of Bojunga made this, what at first glance was a literature for the younger audience, a literature mainstay for many and diverse sections of the reading public. These novels sought out a place beyond generations. Written for children, given the playful, fable aspects of the stories, they also spoke to a younger audience who could see their own striving in the novels narrative which reflected their struggles in the social/gender order. And lastly, not without insight from Bojunga, these tales spoke to the reading community of adults as social commentary becoming a focus for a liberating voice for a Latin and South American audience wishing to confront and fulfill themselves in ways beyond the normative and oppressive regulations of the hierarchies of their society. In her Interview with Lennart Kjörling on the Alma-Award site Bojunga elaborates this emancipatory function of the texts: "They're about how it is to be a girl, about justice, about death, even... I've written quite a few pieces on death. I actually think it's good for children"³⁷. In the same interview, Kjörling spoke to D'Angela Serra, who is vice president of the International Board of Books for Young People (IBBY) :

Lygia is very original, with a style all of her own. She speaks to children in an intelligent way that gives children's literature a whole new platform. She enchants them with her use of magic, developing the legacy of Lobato. Her books are about the realities of childhood, touching on subjects like security, intimacy, doubt, sensuality and what it means to be a girl, always in a subtle way. And Lygia questions the social status quo from a position of passionate commitment.³⁸

Bojunga's children's work, unhinged from a normal setting for literary genres, and came to operated within the reading community in many and multiple axis of audiences and ambitions. Three fields of reading context were met by the freedom of the narrative in the fantasy text of the real. On the one hand, Bojunga embraced a children's literature through the play of the fantastic and the fantasy of play opening worlds unbound by the constrictions of logic and language, outside of

³⁶ Alma, *Lygia Bojunga* and, *varldslitteratur, Brazilian: Lygia Bojunga Nunes*, <https://varldslitteratur.se/person/lygia-bojunga-nunes> [hämtad 2017-12-08]

³⁷ Alma, *Lygia Bojunga*

³⁸ Ibid.

the language of the normative. On a second reading level, Bojunga unfastened and liberated a field of gender in a fantastic address to the youthful reader struggling to mount an identity. And lastly the adult, which, due to the stigma of these texts being "just simple children's book", gave Bojunga an invisibility to the patriarchy and political authority, which translates into a unchained political voice and artistic freedom speaking to the adult's open confrontation of morality, freedom and justice.

Yet this separation of the three audience levels of Bojunga's work, is much too simplistic and does not embrace the overlap that the issues have between these diverse audiences. Social issues impact and can be understood by children just as play is necessary for the adult. Bojunga understands this interesting intersection between these and utilizes this understanding in her narrative structures.

Bojunga's engagement with her audience of children and her desire to present a number of more serious issues than common in this genre, such as death, unhealthy family dynamics and oppression in gendering issues, is meant to give children, who confront these issues, a means of developing a voice in these dilemmas as well opening alternative pathways to cope with these issues. As Bojunga states in her interview on the Alma-website³⁹ she believes that frank discussions around these issues can be therapeutic for the children in all aspects of the social and familial even beyond the literary. Among these "difficult" issues Elina Druker of Stockholm University notes this concern and has stated that a major endeavor in the work of Bojunga is to show "solidarity to children"⁴⁰.

This concern with children and wishing to empower them, especially in their gendering roles, is most adamantly, and quite specifically, elaborated in Bojunga's three novels, "Sex gånger Lucas", "Min vän målaren" and "Den gula väskan". Well-known and respected children's literature researcher Maria Nikolajeva states: "Bojunga's characters, each in his or her own way, struggle against the rules and regulations that adults have imposed on them"⁴¹. The emancipating environment of Bojunga's fantasy world for children is recurrent as a theme for most of her narrative spaces which both liberate and define the struggling children as they confront the openness of identify. As Nikolajeva states: "Through dreams and imagination, reminiscent of Ana Maria Machado, she (the protagonist of "Free Rope") learns to explore her inner landscape and liberates herself..."⁴². The word that Nikolajeva uses, "liberates", resonates with the concept of liberty which unfolds into personal "empowerment". By showcasing children who achieve liberation and empowerment Bojunga uses her literary works as a means of solidarity with children.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Elina Druker, 2014

⁴¹ Maria Nikolajeva, *Power, Voice and Subjectivity in Literature*, (New York, Routledge 2009) p. 151-152

⁴² Ibid.

This solidarity is a sphere for openness creating a narrative textual space for children where the sense of wonder becomes a powerful tool for liberation.

Bojunga in her text avoids condescending and belittling her young audience while recognizing their struggles, wonder, and, ultimately, capability to be powerful. Bojunga understands the creation of identity is a open place of struggle for all and that children have the same struggling thoughts and defuse desires. The child given an open space for the narrative of the self can be strong, even stronger than the adult as this fluid identity is more true as it is open and wandering⁴³. Nikolaveja elaborates on this point: "...The child proves stronger than the adult in his very capacity of being a child."⁴⁴ This analyses and summary of Bojunga's work reflects the same recognitions the Astrid Lingren Memorial Prize Jury had in regard to Bojunga's inclinations, a strong recognition of the child's mind and the potential it has to develop in many open and meaningful ways:

A deep penetration of a child's psyche is the foremost characteristic of Lygia Bojunga, who manages to use simple and accessible language to convey complex mental states, unspeakable truths and most secret emotions. Each book is a study of human fate drawn with precision and tremendous empathy; a sophisticated portrait of a child working through loss, pain and sorrow.⁴⁵

Maria Nikolaveja and Ying Toijer-Nilsson⁴⁶ both in their research regarding Lygia Bojunga compare her work to Ana Maria Machado, largely due to both being introduced to the west (through translations, that is) at roughly the same time. Nikolaveja dwells upon the parallels of the two authors to give an idea of Brazilian children's literature:

... Lygia Bojunga and Ana Maria Machado, two highly appraised Brazilian Children s authors, are extremely and consciously subversive. Writing within the tradition of magical realism, both authors use genre conventions in the same way some North American and

⁴³ "what a feminine syntax might be is not simple nor easy to state, because in that "syntax" there would no longer be either subject or object, "oneness" would no longer be privileged, there would no longer be proper meanings, proper names, "proper" attributes ... Instead, that syntax" would involve nearness, proximity, but in such an extreme form that it would preclude any distinction of identities, any establishment of ownership, thus any form of appropriation."Luce Irigaray *The Speculum of the Other Woman*, (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1985) p. 134

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Alma, *Lygia Bojunga*

⁴⁶ Toijer-Nilsson, Ying, 2000, p. 181

European authors use fantasy; a condition of carnivalesque, suspended reality where the child has more freedom.⁴⁷

Nikolaveja concludes: "...In Bojunga's books we meet children empowered by special vision".⁴⁸ Youth, then, and the open possibilities of identity, is an essential part of Bojunga's writing, as Kjörling points out:

The child's point of view is always paramount in Bojunga's texts. She views the world with the imaginative gaze of a child at play. Here, everything is possible: her principal characters can conjure up a horse they can ride away on, or draw a door on the wall which they can walk through just moments later. Fantasy often functions as a way of dealing with distressing personal experiences.⁴⁹

When Bojunga was interviewed after receiving the Alma-prize in 2004, she noted, regarding her work and Brazilian literature,:

Over here, it's more playful. I think we could benefit from more Swedish influences – there's too much play in our literature. My first book was fairly light-hearted, about carnival and other fun things, but since then my books have grown more serious. They're about how it is to be a girl, about justice, about death, even... I've written quite a few pieces on death. I actually think it's good for children: many of my readers have told me that my books have followed them through their lives, that they turn to them in times of trouble, and that feels good to know".⁵⁰

Bojunga hints at a tantalizing neglect of one remarkable issue in her work: not only does she deal with subjects as death, gender and justice, but she deals with them in subtle ways that avoid simplicity yet still can be grasped in the child's mind's-eye. Bojunga is noteworthy in her ways of finding a way to get inside the mind of a child; to capture the wonder and innocence of that age, while exposing the marginalization of children. Bojunga is able to write about childhood without

⁴⁷ Maria Nikolajeva, 2009, p. 151

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Alma, *Lygia Bojunga*

⁵⁰ Ibid.

being condescending and avoids clichés. Not only does she, as of usual to Alma-prize winning authors, tackle social and philosophical issues through the mind of the child, but she narrates the free field of the self that is limitless.

To open this larger field of the self, outside of the narrow parameters of the patriarchy, Ying Toijer-Nilsson's summary evaluation of Lygia Bojunga's novels note that the fantasy elements help the children immerse themselves into the story narrative⁵¹. Both Scholars, Toijer-Nilsson and Nikolajeva⁵², see the fantasy element of Bojunga's tales as means to better widen her stories, and intake a larger narrative form to welcome all children regardless of background, transversing any spheres of class or race which could contain the open fields necessary for empowerment.

Ying Toijer-Nilsson notes that the fantastic writing tradition saw its beginnings in early 19th century Brazil⁵³. Both scholars describe the fantastic literatures and the decedents of the tradition of magical realism in Brazil, and see Bojunga's writing style as following a quite specific tradition in Brazilian children's literature. While this writing style was common in Brazilian children's literature, it was seen as a subversion of European children's stories once introduced to the western markets. (And of course Bojunga, due to the political themes in her novels, even subverts the Brazilian tropes). It is no accident that both scholars compare Machado and Bojunga, and, while their similarities are exaggerated in their comparative formulations, both authors may be likened as they utilize their novels to tackle the problematic's of Brazilian society and don't shy from scathing social commentary. However Bojunga's ability to, as Nikolajeva puts it, "penetrate the child's mind"⁵⁴, makes her very unique. The language and writing style differs between the two authors with Bojunga exploring a poetic-fantastical vocabulary of the child's unlocked mind and Machado detailing a grounded, commonsensical language of the children's lively adventure.

Contextualizing Machados and Bojunga in the Brazilian context generally Nikolaveja notes: "Brazilian writer's subversive impact depends on the use of the synergy of heterological conditions, including race, gender and age. Yet another prominent feature in Bojunga's as well as Machado's works is strong female protagonist, young as well as old."⁵⁵

Bojunga is commonly and consistently praised for her insights and explorations in the constructing and determining roles given to girls and women. Primarily discussions and analyses have focused on Bojunga and her narrative work that centre on her depictions of female protagonists and female identified characters. And there can certainly be no argument that

⁵¹ Toijer-Nilsson, Ying, 2000, p. 181

⁵² Maria Nikolajeva, 2009, p. 155

⁵³ Toijer-Nilsson, Ying, 2000, p. 179

⁵⁴ Maria Nikolajeva, 2009, p. 155

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Bojunga's writing has pride of place for its discourses on gender, specifically when it comes to discussing sexism towards girls and women. However mislaid in this debate is the place given to male protagonists and their struggle in the gendering dilemma of the social, in Bojunga's oeuvre.

Even a cursory look at the output of Bojunga's work show not only a concern and deconstruction of gendered expectations towards girls, but also the ones aimed at boys. This observation, of Bojunga's concern with gender fluidity within both feminine and masculine subjects, highlights the many means of subversion womanhood which is portrayed in Bojunga's work and lends itself to a possible and open alternative masculinity. Through the novels struggles and characterization Lucas, Alfonso and Claudio each find ways to reject violence and toxic masculinity and embrace their own versions of manliness. These characters, male as well as the female, expose the open and fluid gendering Bojunga attempts to grasp in all of her writings.

Further focus will lie on "Min vän målaren", "Sex gånger Lucas" and "Den Gula Väskan" due to the complex portrayals these novels give in regards to gender and gender expression, offering a fresh take on Masculinity with the male protagonist.

6. Masculinity and the Obliteration of the Other

"Sex gånger Lucas", follows the unsteady youthful life of Lucas as he navigates the uneven terrain of childhood in a landscape of uncaring adults. As Maria Nikolajeva succinctly summarizes the novel : "...Lucas's foremost dilemma is his complicated relationship with his authoritative father and his fear of not being to live up to the adults' expectations, while he also sees the faults and insecurity of adult's life"⁵⁶. When "Sex gånger Lucas" was first translated and introduced to Sweden, a review of the novel in *Svenska Dagbladet* strangely dismissed the book as a "far too strong of a depiction of a child's anxiety"⁵⁷. The novel, regardless of this causal rejection, embraces not only the anxious, but a lingers on a exuberant playfulness and uplifting tone, expressed in a writing style that captures an innocent sense of large and awe filled wonder. Lucas's journey is the main focus of the book, but the dark side of this story is heavily weighted by the actions and pressures from a father determined and driven by machismo. While the father is unambiguously the person causing the most friction in both his sons and wife's lives, Lucas's journey, peeking though this narrative cloud of abuse, is founded on a turbulent exploration for his own form of identity and masculinity. Lucas's search for a liberated identity is undermined, continually, by the arbitrary

⁵⁶ Maria Nikolajeva, 2009, p. 152

⁵⁷ Anonymous, "Sex gånger Lucas: Allför starkt om barns ångest", *Svenska Dagbladet (SvD)* 04-10-2004, <https://www.svd.se/allfor-starkt-om-barns-angest> [hämtad 2017-12-08]

absolutes of adults present in his life. Nikolayeva mentions the father as the main antagonist to Lucas⁵⁸, yet we find that all of the adults who circulate about Luca's journey to an open identity sabotage his seekings, even if to a lesser extent. Lucas's mother and his art teacher Leonor both have major affects on Lucas's behavior, and influence his worldview throughout the novel. And yet when both must give even the slightest of comforts to Lucas fail in their embrace due to thier embrace of patriarchal positions and rulings from the Father. When the third person narration of the text shifts to Lucas's point of view he often is reflecting on how he should organize his actions in relation to the adults, and how he should express himself regarding the adults, but this is the trap laid in the patriarchy of the father, and accepted tacitly by the women of Luca's world. Lucas is struggling for his own identity, but the ideological space of the adults force Lucas into a single way of being, a simplicity he wishes to escape. The adults, playing only in the identity formula of masculine authority, attempt to take up all the narrative space meant to impose a rigid identity for Lucas's identity. This constrained space, verses the open space Lucas seeks in his play, curtails Lucas's emotions, his creativity and space to interact with others separating him from healthy friendship, including a brutal severing of the tender company in the father's aggressive rejection of Luca's companion dog. This places Lucas, and his journey's narrative, in a focus which exists almost exclusively on his reaction to the adults who reside in the containments of the patriarchy and his internal states which seek out a broader and open field through play and fantasy.

The novel starts with the chapter "Lucas och ansiktet", which minutely details Lucas examining his father, showcasing an unequal dynamic that exists as not only a hierarchy of control but also as effacement of the being of the younger Lucas: "Lucas kom in i rummet och såg pappa stå framför spegeln. Han stod kvar och såg på pappa som såg sig i spegeln"⁵⁹. The father continues his self-centered, admiring grooming of himself, not noticing that his son has entered the room, who gazes upon the father in awe inspired self effacement: "Vilken stilig pappa jag har, tänkte Lucas"⁶⁰. Luca's self-obliteration of the self, necessitated by the fathers need to take all of the space, continues to be highlighted by Bojunga in a deadly comical sense in the two first chapters of the novel as the father creates a space of invisibility surrounding his son. The space fashioned by the father to give himself pride of place is required in the hierarchy of the manly space: "- Pappa. - Mmm?. - Jo... jo, det regnar. - Och? - Jo, jag... jag... Han såg på pappa. Rösten halkade i väg. Jo, jag... jag glömde vad jag skulle säga"⁶¹. Bojunga paints the power imbalance and anxiety between Lucas and his father in this scene where the voice of Luca disappears in the Image of the Father, the

⁵⁸ Maria Nikolajeva, 2009, p. 153

⁵⁹ Lygia Bojunga, 2004, p. 7

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 8

one who is the centre and all. Lucas sees the father, but the father can neither see nor recognize him. Lucas tries to convey something, but is due to his invisibility, now to himself as well as in the vision of his father, is unable to say what he wants to say. His self as voice is obliterated in his invisibility as well. Lucas's invisibility emphasizes Lucas's fear of being left alone. A fear which overpowers and becomes a further obliteration of the self. Lucas as invisible to his father becomes invisible to himself. Being ignored creates Lucas as an empty space which leads Lucas to a vacant loneliness. An emptiness which circles continually back on itself creating invisibility ever more vacant. This desperate emptiness prods Lucas to desperately plea that the inclement weather would make the evening unpleasant for his parents, in hopes this will change the fathers plans. Notable, the scenario plays out differently with his mother:

- Mamma... - Mmm. - Det regnar. - Ja, det gör det.... Det går snart över, gubben. - Jag vågar inte vara ensam hemma. - Börja inte med det där nu igen, älskling. Såg du inte pappas min när vi åt middag? Han gillade inte alls att du började med det där pratet om att du var rädd nu igen. - Kan inte du stanna här med mig. - Pappa vill inte missa premiären. - Då kan han väl gå dit själv. - Nämen Lucas.⁶²

The mother tries to soften the blow to Lucas that will cast him further into loneliness, but in doing so she comes merely to reiterate that the single person who operates here is the father. No other voice is to be heard ("How can you say that?"): "Hon sänkte rösten. - Moster Elisa ringer snart och pratar med dig en stund"⁶³. Lucas is not as afraid to confront his mother with the situation; however he is dismissed by her as well. The mother in this incident, as well as near the novel's climax, shows signs of what Armand de Bonneval has written as: "... Women who could potentially change this situation are too often content with the status quo..."⁶⁴. The mother is subtly aware of the situations injustice, but cannot help but grasp the only system available, the male centered world. Having only this ideology of the male to operate through, the mother becomes the effacement of not only Lucas, but her own self. Her own desires to not leave Lucas alone must be obliterated. The Mother tries to give Lucas advice how to find courage, but must use a voice not heard by the Father, a whispered tone. That is as articulate as she can get. Only a whisper is possible, since both Lucas and her have to mould themselves to the father's (the dominant males) liking. This molding is a space for the unseen and the unheard. Lucas is afraid, and desperately is

⁶² Ibid. p. 9

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Philippe Armand de Bonneval, " Council Of Hemispheric Affiars (COHA), 2016

trying to escape his predicament of obliteration, and, despite neither of his parents support, he noticeably approaches the situation with different quantities of tenuous uncertainty with each parent. An uncertainty which is determinate in the masculine hierarchy and the placement each, mother and son, reside in this hierarchy. For the father Lucas is uncertainty at the levels of his invisibility to his father: "... (Pappa) gick baklänges mot dörren för att kunna spegla sig lite till. Han gick rakt in i Lucas"⁶⁵ (the father sees only his reflected image and Lucas is unseen, even when the father collides with him). For the mother this uncertain is granted only by reading the world through the ideological lens of the Fathers vision: "När hon fick syn på Lucas... Hon böjde sig ned. - Kan du knäppa i ryggen, älskling?"⁶⁶. (The mother sees Lucas, but only through the sight of the father's priority).

When the adults leave, Lucas realizes he must force himself to be less afraid. The problematic is that Lucas has obliterated himself on multiple levels within the ideological mechanism of the father's hierarchy. Finding a self which could confront the issues of loneliness is a quagmire. Lucas, as emptied by the actions and ideas of the father, has no resource for active confrontation to his loneliness. His only model for thinking and action is the same model which imposed his loneliness, the singular, rigid model of masculine self-regard imposed by his father. Lucas throughout the novel is belittled and mistreated by his father for showing emotions (no matter how small) that the father reads as feminine. The loneliness is caused by the father's obliteration of his sons and wife's voice, and therefore selves, but, as Lucas casts about in search of a model by which to confront the loneliness engulfing him, the only script at hand is the masculine one presented by the father: "Lucas gick framför spegeln och såg på sig själv... Han vred huvudet åt både hållen och sneglade mot spegeln för att se från vilken sida han var mest lik pappa. Han sköt fram bröstkorgen"⁶⁷. Lucas mimics his father's previous behavior attempting to find a space in the masculine normative which has no harbor for the fear of being alone. To be the father is to install stoicism within himself, to defeat his loneliness. Bron Ingoldsby recognizes this horrific normative stoicism and the lack emotional support from the absent father which "creates a sense of inferiority that drives boys to reach an unattainable level of masculinity, a pursuit often validated by the aggressive and apathetic behaviour"⁶⁸. Grasping the father is to implant the masculine hetero-normative which lets no weakness or emotion penetrate the facade, nor let any other concern, but the hierarchy of the masculine self, take place. In order to obtain to hegemonic masculinity Lucas would have supplant his own identity. This realization, that the patriarchy calls for, of the

⁶⁵ Lygia Bojunga, 2004, p. 8

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid. p.10

⁶⁸ Bron Ingoldsby, "The Latin American Family: Familism vs. Machismo", *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 1:57-62 (1991), p. 57-64

supplanting of his own identity, his own struggle to create his self, causes a flood of new and conflicting emotions. He struggles to adapt to the masculine, but an onslaught of emotions hints at something Other in himself: “Han ville gråta. Lucas knep ihop läpparna. De skulle inte släppa fram minsta lilla snyftning. Han knep ihop ögonen. Någon tår skulle inte heller komma ut, så det så. Han skulle vara en kille kille som pappa inte kunde klaga på. Han skulle vara en hjälte!... Lucas öppnade ögonen... Pappa hade sagt att en hjälte erövrar sin rädsla”⁶⁹. Lucas struggles to suppress the tears and fear inside him, since he, despite being by himself, is still plagued by his father's standards, the ideology of masculinity and its function. Lucas struggles to visualize in his mind's eye what exactly the ideal is that his father represents.

A dawning awareness begins to come to Lucas in this dilemma. The father uses the word “*erövrar*”, a word that is quite loaded. A word which implies violent control. A capture of all that is around it that wants to become not other, but be pounded into, and be consumed, by itself. A violent disagreement which everything that is not what is the male demands it be.: “Han kom ihåg att mitt I ett gräl hade mamma skrikit till pappa att han var en *erövrare*”⁷⁰.

Yet still, while standing in front of the mirror, these undesired emotions still surface. Lucas attempts to impose this system onto himself, but his emotions still betray him. Regardless of the exclusions that the male hierarchy wants to impose Lucas's full emotions and mind still seek to erupt: “...Nånting hade börjat göra ont igen... Nånting gjorde ont I halsen, I nacken, I tanden, och om pappa sa: jamen vad är det som gör ont egentligen? Så svarade Lucas bara: jag vet inte, det är nånting. Om mamma sa: försök förklara vad du menar med nånting, så förklarade han inte, han visste bara att nånting gjorde ont”⁷¹. Lucas is suffering in this scene from a form of anxiety. This anxiety is generated in the intersection, and conflict, of Lucas's feelings and the toxic situations imposed by the law of the father. The toxic masculinity that requires Lucas to contain his emotions erupts in nameless pain. This anxiety is bred in the terrifying conflict of a self that seeks realization of its emotional and mental self imposed by the conquering capture that the male ideology imposes on the self and society.

For Bojunga this is the “*Någonting*” that causes Lucas pain. It is a focus of agony that the child doesn't have the words to understand nor the self to confront. When applied to a masculinity and machismo lens, the scenarios Lucas finds himself in at this time is similar to the masculine western ideal of “Boys don't cry”, i.e. after boys incorporate masculine identity it is expected that they have fewer emotions and don't express them publicly (the exception being, according to

⁶⁹ Lygia Bojunga, 2004, P.10

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 10

⁷¹ Ibid.

Bojunga, anger and violence). Bron Ingoldsby identifies this emotional barrenness as a major consequence that is indicative of machismo ideals. Ingoldsby describes this emptying of the emotional palette in his studies where he notes that due to the masculine ideals of toughness and lack of emotional weakness in the hetero-normative; fathers are always positioned to reside in a distant, emotionally unavailable relationship to their sons. This emotional severing from self and others around them results in what he calls “a sense of inferiority that drives boys to reach an unattainable level of masculinity, a pursuit often validated by the aggressive and apathetic behavior”⁷².

Lucas, in the very first pages we have met him, has been shown being invisible by his father, who very literally takes little notice of him outside of considerations of his own being. Lucas's only memories revolve only around communication with his father as single focus in the exchange. Not as an interchange that should be entailed by actual communication, but a directive's between the two, from father to son, founded on a sole occupation with the father. The only communication which comes to take Lucas into account, are proscriptive statements (and angers) calling for Lucas to be a man, to express the aggressive and stoic. Lucas internalizes his father's disapproval (his mother even encourages in this internalization and reprimand Lucas when he acts in a way the father disapproves of). This internalization, which encompasses the male ideological position, which makes him try to forcefully change (*erövra*) himself. In imposing the masculine model over his self Lucas swears to himself not a single tear will drop despite that a few do fall. Lucas is pressured to implement the standard normative male construct by both his mother and his father and is called upon to jettison his newly evolving emotional self for a person who is to be less expressive and “emotional”. This severing of the self from its own development and the imposition of the masculine homogeneity leads to Lucas to view his fear and anxious feelings as a separate, unnamable something, an Other which is not the self. In the male hierarchy, the language of the spectrum of full emotions of the male is lost and impossible to find. Lucas has to deny himself the seeings and emotions of his new emerging self, so that, even at the beginnings, he can't explain the most simple things of himself. Stephen M. Whitehead in his *Masculinity studies on men and emotions* sadly relates the pressure to jettison realizations of a full self under the masculine model of the self and sees it as the greatest of “the personal cost... (as) repressed feelings and denial of emotions”⁷³. Self is lost, and even a language to understand the world: “We began to discover that we had no language of feeling”⁷⁴. Lucas is experiencing just this loss of the fullness of the world due to this male ideology; he has lost the very words to the pain he feels in his being. Lucas being

⁷² Bron Ingoldsby, 1991, p. 57-64

⁷³ Stephen M Whitehead, *Men and Masculinites*, (Cambridge, Polity 2006) p.170

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 177

hushed and ignored become invisible to himself and craves to impose some system to obtain a self, even one which makes most of the world unsayable and unseen. Whitehead, in line with Bojunga's narratives, laments on the machinery of the male hierarchy where aggression and violence often are seen as the only acceptable form of emotional expression from men. Lucas voices this singular emotional stance when he reflects on his frustration for his father's tyranny: "Åh, vad han skulle slå pappa om han kunde slå utan att pappa såg vem son slog"⁷⁵.

The narrative oddity played with by Bojunga is that the father constantly has eruptions of emotion, but this is a simplistic, singular, extreme, and out-of-control emotion: anger. Though this anger may manifest itself through the slight variations of irritation, frustration, and annoyance, the father rejects the total spectrum of emotions as contingent on the formulation of malehood. Bojunga creates the father as an example of violently contained manhood which rejects the totality and variety of emotions as feminine, and therefore, seeks to be purged and reduce these emotional responses to violence and anger. Bojunga's characterization of Lucas's father illustrates this selective restriction of emotions as one manifestation of the aggressive containment of patriarchy's binary of gender. Lucas, with his subversive behavior, his space of play which unmoors the self, embraces the fullness and nuances of all emotions. At the last, in rejecting his father Lucas gives himself more possibilities for an entire and full emotional self. His rejection of rigid sexual politics, founded in the field of play of the vulnerable child, gives him the space to embrace diverse gender expressions. Bojunga presents Lucas as embodying the activity and ground of the open narrative space and becoming a subversive alternative voice for readers who don't desire to be contained by societal gender expectations and crave a means to create a fresh means to express their masculinity.

After his parents leave for the premiere Lucas immediately begins a horrific dive into loneliness. He first contemplates calling his aunt as his mother mentioned, but abandons this idea due to the fear of his father's reaction: "Men då skulle pappa få veta att han inte vågat vara ensam hemma igen"⁷⁶. He instead starts imagining a fantasy dog companion. Even the slight yapping and one way communication with a dog is recognized in Lucas's fantasy play as a more full communication with another than ever can be gained in the slight acknowledgements of the father: "Och berätta för hunden hur rädd har var... Hunden... aldrig, ALDRIG skulle skrallra om hur rädd han hade varit... Nu slutade Nånting göra ont"⁷⁷. The game of connection with the imaginary dog spurs an easing of Lucas's loneliness, and Lucas's creative self begins peeking around the corners of Luca's fears: "Nu fick han lust att ta fram modelleran"⁷⁸. Lucas applies himself and imprints a

⁷⁵ Lygia Bojunga, 2004, p.11

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 11

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 12

mask out of his face from clay his mother has purchased to motivate Luca's creative side. Lucas moulds the clay to a likeness of himself, but a self separate and better than where the mask originated from: "...att ansiktet fick en erövrarmin. En min som han också ville ha"⁷⁹. Lucas plays out a scene with dialogue in front of the mirror, pretending that the mask is alive and another person, willing the mask to ever stay in place stuck to his face. Lucas speaks to the mask and, in hopes of getting rid of his fear, calls the mask a "*conquer*". However the word has another meaning in this context: the mask to Lucas represents courage and companionship, instead of tyranny. He both uses the mask as an imaginary friend as well as a way to identify himself as someone without fear.

The pretend mirrored dialogue builds to an engaged conversation regarding dancing. Lucas remembers back to a conversation with his mother, on a similar night and situation where the parents were again leaving Lucas to go out to a party⁸⁰. Lucas, motivated by this flashback, where the mother spoke of "dancing with the father", begins to dance with himself, mask on and in coordinated motion with his reflection in the mirror, which proves a soothing comfort to his fears and anxiety: "Hela kroppen följer med, Lucas har glömt regnet och blåsten...Kunde det vara sant, att han också kunde dansa?!"⁸¹. Lucas's imagination and playfulness erupt through mask, mirror, and memory expressing his desires and constructed on a sense of security of the self. Here we can see a certain twist on masculinity and identity, which Lacan and Deleuze (as reference by Whitehead) have theorized before: "The subject can never know oneself as a man, nor indeed feel masculine, other than through the gaze and reception of the Other and through its own narratives of self"⁸². Lucas feels, throughout the novel, as inadequate as a young boy. this is due to normal insecurities in developing a stable and adequate personality, but, in Luca's case, this is creation of a self is continually and consistently undermined through the parents constant show of contempt for Lucas's behavior.

The Lucas's father embraces being "*a conquer*", and Lucas is forced to aspire to this as well. Throughout the novel "*Conquer*" is an arch word that is used to excavate Lucas's suppression of his own identity, and how it reflects his relationship to his father and patriarchal detailing of behavior. Lucas attempts to build himself according to the father. Lucas as a subject being formed through

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ This lets the reader understand that Lucas' parents don't just go to occasional events, but go out so often and leave Lucas alone so much it is most likely a case of neglect. It also gives us insight into his relationship with his mother, who he seems to wish to be more close to: "-Vad fin du är mamma. - Säg det högre så att pappa hör... Den blev bra den här klänningen, eller hur, Lucas? ... Är blixlåset uppe, Lucas? ... Hej då, älskling. Pappa väntar. - Vart ska du? - Får mamma en puss - Vart ska du!...Nu gör Nångting ont igen." The situation escalates to Lucas desperately trying to get his mother to dance with him: "-Nu ropar pappa. - Dansa med mig!"

⁸¹ Lygia Bojunga, 2004, P.15

⁸² Stephen M. Whitehead, 2006, p. 213

the father tries to make himself “*a conquer*” (a form of masculinity repressing emotions, violently assertive, controlling and privileged in all situations, etc.). Lucas must suppress his spontaneous, dancing self to see through the eyes of adults. This is necessary as the dancing self is of no worth in the hierarchies of the masculine. It is a self-worth only imposed from the outside from the male dominated categories of acceptance and understanding. Never from the Self. E. Anthony Rotunda's in *Boyhood and Masculinity*, succinctly mirrors Bojunga's narration: “The experience of boy culture encouraged a male child to become the master, the conquer...”⁸³. Lucas is in the predicament where his surroundings are demanding him to become a master and conquer where control is all and communication is nothing. Lucas deeply desires to find his place in the family and the social wishes for this conquering personality, but is unable to sustain a personality which seeks control and domination over connection and contact. The reality of the repressed emotional spectrum and a leakage of ideas which don't fit the narrow model of the controller, cause a rupture for Lucas in the model of the Hegemony of the Conqueror. Luca's own world of the dream play subverts the singular behaviors of the machismo; he invents figures and phantom imaginative friends to whom he gives grand titles of “conquer”. These imaginary friends and colleagues have strong and assertive natures, while Lucas himself remains outside of this “conquer”, inclined to dance, and seek out a fluid creativity. The mask as a “conquer” separates Lucas from his fear, avoids the ideology which means to contain, and frees Luca to the space of free motion and the dance.

The conflict between Lucas's father ideals and Lucas's actual behavior becomes even more apparent at the first chapters end when Lucas's parents come home. The radio has been turned on by Lucas, and it is in the rhythms from the radio which Lucas finds for the dance. The father confronts Lucas on why the radio is on, angry that Lucas was using the radio music to assuage his fears. Already livid at the music the father spies Lucas's mask: “-Vad har du på är det du har I ansiktet? Han slet bort Ansiktet. En bit lera for ner på golvet... Han (Lucas) satte ihop dem och försökte hitta ansiktet I leran... - Du hade sönder det! Han började gråta. Mamma kom in med en orolig min”⁸⁴. The mask is dashed to the floor and broken by Lucas's father. Lucas attempts to salvage the mask and mend it, breaking down when he sees that fixing the mask is impossible. Luca's unfettered tears provokes the father to verbalize what before has been bubbling so obviously beneath the surface: “Nu Hade pappa fått nog: - Typisk. Frun lipar och ungen lipar. Han drog Lucas ur mammas famn. - Låt henne gråta, hon är ju fruntimmer. Men du ska bli en karl och jag vill inte ha en lipsill till son...som är rädd för det ena och det andra.”⁸⁵The father actively tells the son to not

⁸³ Magnus Öhrn, *Men vad i himlens namn har ni för er pojkar! Ulf Starks uppväxtskildringar ur ett manlighetperspektiv*, in Elina Druker & Maria Andersson, *Barnlitteraturanalyser*, (Lund, Studentlitteratur 2013) p. 132

⁸⁴ Lygia Bojunga, 2004, p.17

⁸⁵ Ibid.

behave in a manner that is associated with women and girls. His words even dismiss the mother, by putting her on some unseen low rung on the hierarchical ladder, far below that which is conceivable even for a male child. Now all sets of the hierarchy in male hegemony are exposed in the narrative, the masculine is the only being with a true existence in the formulation of being. Each Other is assigned a differing, but unseen rung on the ladder of power. “The power difference in the relationship between a man and a woman not only creates the social norm of machismo”⁸⁶, as Resnick and Yolanda notes, but it also exposes the hierarchy of machismo where women and children are seen as vastly beneath adult men. This hierarchy of the male dominion unfolds dramatically in Lucas's case where the young boy is not to be as low as his mother, yet still below, and obliterated in the father. The ideas of hegemonic masculinity in relation to young boys are laid out specifically here. The hierarchy of the Masculine Hegemony, and more strictly held in machismo culture, positions males and females, actions and behavior, very specifically on the hierarchy. Women are below men, male children are above women, crying and dancing are exiled, etc. Resnick, Rotunda⁸⁷ and R. W. Connell⁸⁸ underline the fact that this stringent set, and placement, of conceptual alignments in Hegemonic masculinity is an ideal/norm that reinforces male privilege as well as adding pressure for a narrow performance of masculinity. Connell adds that “hegemonic masculinity”⁸⁹ is a hierarchy that explicitly maintains many norms relating to manliness. These norms, even quite independently of the social situation, are norms that all men in any sociological group must abide by⁹⁰.

The problematic with the overly constricted set of coding and readings played out in the hierarchy of the machismo culture, and the masculine ideology in general, is that few find it possible to enter into the system completely, even the male. Whitehead underscores this continual lack: “not many men meet the normative standards (of hegemonic masculinity)”⁹¹. A lack and gap which haunts the male as a continual confrontation of the masculine: “many men live in some tension with, or distance from, hegemonic masculinity”⁹². The pressure from these norms are not only significant to men (who will constantly fail to live up to the norms) but this is a broader issue impacting on all gendering as “both women and men are understood to be subjected to this process, and thus adversely affected, albeit in different ways”⁹³. This problematic seen in Lucas’s father

⁸⁶ R.P. Resnick and Yolanda Quinones Mayo, "The Impact of Machismo on Hispanic Women". *Affilia*. 11 (3), (1996) p. 257–277.

⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 257–277

⁸⁸ Magnus Öhrn, 2013, p. 132

⁸⁹ R. W. Connell, *Maskuliniteter*, translated by Åsa Linden (Cambridge, Daidalos 2008) p. 115

⁹⁰ Rotunda emphasized in his studies of Boy culture that in these groups, the young boys often become the points of pressure, having internalized the law of the father, and expect the other boys to be stoic and to “dare” to do things

⁹¹ Stephen M Whitehead, 2006, p. 90-91

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

behavior towards both his son and wife, and is ultimately showcased by the entirety of emotions the father disapproves of. Lucas's father tells Lucas to reject vulnerability, telling him to ignore his mother and to become "a man". He even separates the mother and son from each other, which combined with his tone towards both his wife and child, is singularly aggressive, and inhabits an extremely verbally hostile situation. Lucas, in the situation, recognizes that he is at the very least forced to verbally confirm that he will conform to his father's demands: "Lucas såg på leran som hade varit Ansiktet. Hans röst var svag... - Du kommer aldrig ,er att se mig gråta. - Det är bra, pojken... Nu går du och slänger det där som du hade i ansiktet"⁹⁴. Lucas is forced even to get rid of the very thing that helped him through being home alone.

This extreme problematic of the emotional constriction of the patriarchy, which Bojunga excavates for Lucas, is in contrasted to the narrative empathy given Claudio in "Min vän Målaren"⁹⁵, who is aware and accepts his feelings, as complicated as they are at times, and regardless of how they are positioned in the hierarchy of emotional demands of the male hegemony. It is not that Claudio exists in a world scoured of masculine ideology but, we see a narrative protagonist who seems odd to the world, but accepts his "oddity". This rupture, which Claudio inhabits, is underscored by the fact that others find him odd when he expresses a variety of emotions, yet inhabiting a self recognizing his stance to fully embrace feelings; Claudio embraces his oddness and the personality he has become.

Nikolajeva summarizes "Min vän målaren" as a novel where a young boy attempts to come to terms with his adult friend's suicide, a journey that "once again" proves the strength of children and the weakness of adults in regard to emotional complexity and embracing the variety of the human⁹⁶. Claudio, throughout the text of the novel, often states outright what he is feeling regardless of where it may lie on the spectrum of acceptable male emotions: "Med en gång började det kännas alldeles mörkt inuti mig.", "Jag blev så förfärligt rädd..."⁹⁷. While Claudio doesn't deny himself his emotions the surrounding community, embracing the conditions of hegemonic masculinity, belittles and Others his feelings. He, like Lucas, is told that what he is feeling is not ideal: " - Jag är kär i Janaina. Alla trodde att jag skojade. Och min syster sade att Janaina ju var femton år... och så skrattade de allihop."⁹⁸ Continually, and throughout the entirety of the novel, after sharing his feelings, Claudio is mocked for exhibiting behavior his family deems odd and outside of conventional social norms. Claudio however, unlike Lucas, does not embrace and internalize this hierarchical perspective. The limiting function in this ideology is obvious to him and

⁹⁴ Lygia Bojunga, 2004, p.17-18

⁹⁵ Lygia Bojunga, *Min vän målaren*, Translated by Bo Ivander, (Finland, Opal 2004)

⁹⁶ Maria Nikolajeva, 2009, p. 152

⁹⁷ Lygia Bojunga, 2004, p. 14

⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 17-18

avoiding this containment is evident to him. Claudio lets his personality dance without guilt, unlike Luca's who is problematized and comes to at times wish to suppress his self in the male ideological system. Claudio's only pondering of the self is through the question of his friend, who has committed suicide. To seek the why of the Other who is unknown.

7. Creativity and the Opening of Self hood

Creativity is mirrored both in Lucas and Claudio as a form of the self which is free and lively. They are creative and through both "Min vän målaren" and "Sex gånger Lucas" the boys use art as a form of comfort and joy. Creativity is fundamental to self and an activity to open worlds of knowing and finding.

Lucas's fathers dismissal of his sons creativity, and the way he destroys the art Lucas has created for solace, is similar to what Claudio goes through in "Min vän målaren" when he turns to a friend about his grief. Showing one of his friends a drawing of his heart: "... igår på frukostrasten kom vi in på det här med hjärta"⁹⁹. Claudio decides to draw his own heart. The heart attempts to capture his somber mood that has come from his painter friends suicide, and to use this to expose and express himself to the world and his friends: "Det var bara det att I stället för att måla hjärtat rött, gjorde jag det brunt. Och I stället för att likna ett hjärta som folk tänker sig det, var det alldeles tillplatat I sidorna..."¹⁰⁰. Claudio creates a heart flattened and wounded to speak to himself of the emotions of hurt and confusion. Showing this rend heart to others is to seek confirmation, communication, and understandings for sorrow. Too seek out many ways to be with sadness: "-Vad ska det där vara? Frågade han. - det syns väl? - Vad då "syns"?... För det första är hjärtan röda. - Kanske det, men det är här är mitt hjärta... Jag är ledsen, och det är därför som mitt hjärta är så här."¹⁰¹ Claudio is trying to use his creativity to explore and understand his grief, and as we have noted before, to openly display emotions often viewed as non-normative behavior in the patriarchy which limits the emotional range for the male. Claudio's classmate responds to Claudio's drawing by stating that hearts are suppose to be rounder and red. Grabbing the paper to show what a heart will really be like, Claudio's friend states: "Mitt är inte som vilket hjärta som helst, det är helt annorlunda... - Det kan det inte... ge mig pappret, så ska jag rita det som det ska vara... - Men

⁹⁹ Lygia Bojunga, 2004, p. 44

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 45

lyssna på vad jag håller på att förklara för dig.”¹⁰² To Claudio sadness may, and must, be articulated in many different forms. It is a field where we seek to find ourselves and the relations with others. Claudio friends, in a bit of unintentional control, reiterates a rigid set of interpretations of where emotions should lie on the spectrum of our personalities and therefore what specific ways they can and should be expressed to be "correct". Yet Claudio exists in an open sense of the self, and becomes a yearning questioning of emotions in the open field. Claudio stands as an exploring cipher to a male hierarchy which demands established and set positions and elaboration of emotions and behaviors. No questions are possible in the male hegemony regarding feeling. Openness is not possible, here, for the law of the father¹⁰³ encompasses all and demands consent. Whitehead grasps what containments Bojonga longs to abandon with creativity: “for many men it is the very spontaneity of intimacy – and trust – that is so threatening and precarious”¹⁰⁴. Claudio's friend, along with Lucas's father, are operating under the patriarchal norm that abandons the creative as the open, and therefore will not let the possible come to the fore. Both lack a grasp of understanding of the deadly dominate ideology which rejects the possibilities given in creativity and emotion. As Kerfoot and Whitehead note about the receding possible in the male hegemony: “In consequence, emotional intimacy remains ever on the horizon for masculine subjects, who are ever guarding against its possibility”¹⁰⁵. The friend is hesitant to the idea of a different kind of heart, and what that means. A creatively open and possible heart is rejected, and only an already determined heart is granted meaning. Naturally, understanding this interchange with the powerful enclosures of the normative, Claudio himself is cautious with showing his grief, and tries to confide only to his closest friend. His friend is very much put off guard by the confidence that Claudio is entrusting to him in his expression and the drawing he presents him. Claudio's friend, being embedded in the limited language of self and its expression played out in patriarchal arrangements of identity, does not have the conceptual grounding for grasping a possibility of alternative understandings, making what Claudio says incomprehensible. Claudio knows exactly what he is attempting in the exchange- he is trying have an open communication about his feelings of confusion and sadness, and is to not wary of showing his grief to a friend. This is different from Lucas, who speaks of “*Någonting*”. A thing that is there but never look at closely. A something that Lucas can't name since he is trying to repress it in the name of the father, but Claudio openly admits to himself in his open search for himself and the possibilities of the creativity difference gives.

¹⁰² Ibid. p. 45-46

¹⁰³ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, (London, Routledge 1997) pg .67

¹⁰⁴ Stephen M Whitehead, 2006, p. 174

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 175

Interestingly, the reaction Claudio gets from his friend echoes certain aspects of when the father confronts Lucas and destroys the mask Lucas so lovingly created:

Men han (Claudios friend) slet till sig min teckning. Och så tog han upp en rödpenna ur fickan och började ändra färgen på mitt hjärta... - Hjärtan ska ha en pil i sig!... Inte det minsta tillplattade bit lät han vara kvar, och jag, min dumskalle, fortsatte att förklara... - Så där! Nu fattar varenda en... Sedan fick han syn på Denise... slet till sig hjärtat ur min hand på mig... Han kutade iväg, gav mitt hjärta åt Denise, och började kicka boll.¹⁰⁶

While no doubt this scene is written in a far more comical tone, the scene has a similar theme. The creative item which the main protagonist has created gets taken away, broken and destroyed. Each creates an object, formulated on a self struggling to identify and create itself outside the normative constraints of the social and communal. This act of creation, the mask and the heart, yields an aggressive response to both young protagonists from individuals who have merged into the constraints and ideology of the masculine hegemony. Hegemonic masculinity engenders a very harsh reaction to men that don't live up to the standard expected of them. The Mask and the Heart, outside of the restricted standard of hegemonic behavior, is a possible open field for alternative possibly of subjectivity, founded on the playing ground of creativity. Strong reactions come from breaking the systemic of the masculine and such a reaction can be seen in "Sex gånger Lucas", where the titular protagonist is attacked by the father for his fear of being alone. Claudio, in "Min vän målaren", experiences this when he is critiqued for his heart being different from other hearts. Despite this hostile response from his friend, Claudio does not let the situation make him abandon the questions of the self or the Heart which can be shaped differently : "Åh. Fast lika så bra... Jag antar att det kommer att ta lång tid innan jag kan hitta en vän som kan fatta det här..."¹⁰⁷. Claudio moves beyond others who don't want to engage with his grappling with grief and the alternative, and creative ways he attempts to display it. This is what separates Claudio's journey from Lucas'. Claudio is more secure in the openness of possibilities of what a self can be, he is seeking a self not regulated solely by the dictates of an imposed culture of identity. His quest to understand the suicide of his friend, the painter, brings him into contact with a world where the self is imposed upon by the rules and codes of the patriarchy. The actual conflicts in masculinity come from the painter who attempts to embed the systems of the masculine hegemony with deadly effects. In this fashion, the painter and Lucas's share predicaments of which Claudio has escaped.

¹⁰⁶ Lygia Bojunga, 2004, p. 46-47

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p.47

Each (as opposed to Claudio) attempts to supplant the open flows and questioning qualities of the self with the rigid and impossible structure of the Male Hegemony.

8. When Many Oppressions Meet

Lucas's creative space begins with a Dance of the Mask, Claudio's seeking and Discordant Heart is the means to grieve and seek the Other outside patriarchal norms. In "Den Gula Väskan"¹⁰⁸ Rakel's creativity becomes a Fabulist world which evades an abusive sexism through a host of fantastic characters, narratives and scenarios which help to navigate a hostile field of gender and identity. The novel centers around the young girl, Rakel, the main protagonist of the novel, who has reached a point of youth where she begins notice of the standard and strict roles genders are given in her society. It has become obvious to Rakel that boys and men get many privileges that girls don't. This frustrates Rakel so much that when pressured about it, she goes into great detail about the gendered inequalities when speaking to her brother. Attempting to explain why she wishes she'd been born a boy Rakel laments the lower stations of the feminine:

- Därför att jag tycker att det är mycket bättre att vara pojke än flicka. Han (Rakel's brother) tittade ganska allvarligt på mig. Plötsligt skrattade han. - Är det säkert?... .. När vi till exempel ska välja lagledare I skolan blir det alltid en pojke. För att inte tala om vem det är som bestämmer I familjen. Det gör alltid pappan... alla säger alltid att det är ni som ska ha utbildning, att det är ni som ska bli dom som bestämmer I familjen, att det är ni som ska ha ansvaret, att – herre gud – det är ni som ska ha allt... Alltid ska vi tjejer vänta på att ni ska bestämma allting åt oss.¹⁰⁹

Rakel verbalizes the basic, complete, and absurd social subordination of women. Rakel is stunned at the overtly odd, and malicious system where women are expected to be submissive to men. A misshapen world where men are always placed as leaders in the family, rule-givers in society, foremost in the community, and are always the center to which interpersonal relations revolve. Rakel sees dumfounding inequality manifest in all aspects of her life, both in family and in school. Her experiences are belittled from only being from the feminine, and even in the slight

¹⁰⁸ Lygia Bojunga, *Den Gula Väskan*, Translated by Karin Rosencrantz-Bergdahl (Simrishamn, Raben & Sjögren 1984)

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 14

action of expressing her thoughts to her brother she is made to become an empty and invisible vessel: "Min bror brydde sig inte ens... Varför skulle han göra det?... Då såg min bror arg ut och sa att det inte tjänade någonting till att tala med mig för jag skulle ändå aldrig säga sanningen"¹¹⁰. Bojunga creates for Rakel a family life which differs from Lucas's and Claudio's in that Rakel is not an only child, through which we may see a patriarchy emanating from siblings as well as parents. Rakel parents are primarily absent from her life due not to neglect (similar to Luca's case), but to the fact of full time work (implying a working class situation vis a vis Lucas and Claudio who are upper middle class at least). In the absence of parents Rakel often finds herself in conflict with her siblings. The familial dynamics of this sibling family life is one of verbal oppressions (and aggressions), the belittling of personhood of Rakel, and the occasional physical abuse.

The bullying of Rakel is founded on both sexist and ageist positioning of Rakel by her siblings. This double oppression encompasses both Rakel's lower status as the youngest and as the female child. The most noteworthy scene underlining this basis of the double oppression bullying occurs when Rakel's family goes to a dinner at their Aunt and Uncles. Rakel already, at the journeys beginning, is not thrilled by this visit as she strongly dislikes her cousin. Rakel's complaint of her cousin is succinct: "Tant Brunilda har en son som är fjorton år, Alberto, men det var länge sedan som jag kom fram till att han inte längre är ett barn. Tant Brunilda går med på allt som han hittar på".¹¹¹ Alberto is most spoiled of the children in his many privileges and Rakel responds to the natural privileges of the rotten son are even more strongly felt due to the fact that this abusive hierarchical behavior is enabled, and encouraged, by his aunt. The enabling of the privilege abuser goes further, however, as Rakel's whole family enjoys participating, and motivating, the cousin to his terrible heights of abuse. Rakel's bullying begins immediately in her interactions with the cousin as the double bind of her lower position calls out to the cousin: "... är det bäst att förklara att Alberto älskar att kvivas med mig."¹¹² The bullying that Rakel implies erupts directly:

Då sa Alberto: - Jag kikar efter och ser vad hon har. Han sa det sjungande... Nå för att se om de andra skulle glömma bort saken och lämna mig ifred sa jag... Han hade kommit och ställt sig helt nära mig. - Jag efter och ser vad hon har. Han sträckte ut händerna som ett monster sträcker ut klorna, och gjorde hemska grimaser. Alla brast ut i skratt, särskilt tant Brunilda. Hon skrattade så tårarna rann. Jag slutade berätta, reste mig och ställde väskan bakom mig. Då började Alberto kittla mig för att se om jag flytta mig... Jag blev vansinnigt

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p. 15

¹¹¹ Ibid. p. 67

¹¹² Ibid. p. 72

irriterad: -... såg åt Alberto att sluta upp med det där.... Tant tycker visst att allt som Alberto gör är roligt, inte sant? Han kan göra all världens dumheter och ändå tycker tant att det är roligt. Min syster såg strängt ut: - Tala inte på det viset...!.¹¹³

The scene escalates to absurd and abusive heights ending with humiliating censor as whole family laughs at Raket's comments. Bojunga exposes the interchange as a horribly ordinary diminishing of the feminine who has no voice, no say, and no real personhood. Raket's comments, as well as her selfhood, are only to be mocked and dismissed. In Raket, Bojunga give us the suppressed, in the cousin Alberto the neutrally elevated male who can shower abuse on all those of the lower. The reader is exposed narratively to cousin Alberto, a male, who position entails a power to do as he likes, to which everything is a "yes", and how Raket's "no" to the bullying is a empty voice to the power of the male. Raket's is exposed to the hierarchy of possibility of action for the male, but is shown that this is a system from which she, as young and female, and now lower-class, is trebly excluded. She thinks, in a moment of blinding internal insight: why couldn't she be born as Alberto (i.e. a boy). The narrative scene depicts the feminine, embodied in Raket, as oppressed, repressed and Othered, even in the family. No repast is given in the narrative torrent of this scene in the novel, as two facts are laid bare to the family complicity to the bullying: money, age and gender. Bojunga's tale unveils the deadly prejudice against the feminine as Raket's family encourages the aunt and cousin to treat her as the rejected and refuse, not important enough in her multiple oppressions to be consider as human. All is set right to this abuse as Raket is the lowest on the hierarchy of the family, and society, and, finally, since the uncle will send gifts to the family. Every gender is complicit in the mindless male hierarchy and Raket's own sisters remain silent to Raket's horrific demeaning, speaking neither against cousin or aunt. With Raket's automatic wishing to be a boy, Bojunga clues the reader into the whispering truth, that the family would reject such terrible behavior if Raket were a male.

Bojunga uses Raket's dilemma, (to be recognized completely in the social is not to be myself, a girl and young, but to be male) to interrogate the hierarchies of the male hegemony where women are imprinted (acted towards) as second-rate civil and social entities. Whitehead gives this evaluation of the patriarchal system the terse name of "gender order";:

For Connell, the gender order is imminent to the capitalist system, sexual politics, gender ideology, the sexual division of labour and all processes of human production. Operating

¹¹³

Ibid. p. 73

within a 'gendered logic'...the acts of force, violence and oppression (against women and 'Others')... Thus the gender order signals the systematic pursuit of power by heterosexual men..."¹¹⁴.

The gender order, which Whitehead quotes from Connell, is a large part of hegemonic masculinity, in that the privileged male is given leeway for violence since he is given this right over lessers of the order by capitalist and patriarchal systems. Alberto's family is wealthier than Rakel's family and Bojunga narratively underscores the double position of oppression (intersection of class and gender) making the position of Rakel doubly vulnerable, even to her own family. The family put up with the aunt and uncle since they receive fancy clothing and other things from them (that is even where Rakel got her bag from), making Rakel's family a site of oppression in relation to the Aunt and Uncles sphere of privilege. Class, age, and gender are all circulating actors which intersect in Rake's situation and places her in an intersectional position of oppressions¹¹⁵. Alberto bullies Rakel and the family under the privilege of rich parents (something that Rakel's family is trying to profit from) and him being a boy. Both sections of his privilege lets Bonjung's narrative exploration delve into his right to do a form of violence, bullying, and the enabling of all the family members circulating in these three (age, class, and gender) spheres where Rakel comes out at the bottom.

Alberto can easily ignore Rakel telling him to stop and even forcefully grab her belongings. Nothing can stop the intersections of privileges in the boy and the aunt laughs rejoicing in the trice oppressions in Rakel. When the family understands the laughing aunt, the family follows in its merriment to the demeaning of the poor, the young, and feminine. The gender order comes into display here; the capitalist system that makes the family value materials over their female child's feelings and well-being. Machismo places a man's value in being "strong" and Alberto's bullying is a manifestation of showing this "strength". As Bron Ingoldsdy pointedly puts it : "One key aspect of Machismo's association to violence is its influence in a man's behavior towards proving his strength"¹¹⁶. Alberto always picks on Rakel, and his mother enables him; this can be seen as a young boy being cruel towards his cousin not just out of immaturity, but also due to the fact that his environment tells him he is both more important as male, can ignore the lower classes of poor and feminine, and all of this behavior is merely the obvious actions of the strength of the privileged.

¹¹⁴ Stephen M Whitehead, 2006, p. 95

¹¹⁵ Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 43, No. 6, (Jul.1991) p. 1241-1299

¹¹⁶ Bron Ingoldsby, 1991, p. 57-64

Bojungo is narratively revealing the character of Alberto as toxic masculinity, but as, Ingoldsby¹¹⁷ points out, and to which Bojungo would agree, his behavior is a perversion of the strong, which only sees strength as manifest in a form of violence.

9. Being Lost is the Only Hope

Lucas, after the struggle with his father who destroyed the mask, is hesitantly given permission to get a dog. In many a long and lone hours with this solitary companion, Lucas becomes steadfastly and inordinately attached to the stray and vice versa. Even though the father has grudgingly given Lucas permission to keep the dog, his anger and resentment begins to grow as he sees a bond of attachment and love begin to grow between the two. As the father encapsulates a distant stoic demeanor which demotes emotional engagement to the Other as lower, outside, perverse in the register of manly attributes, the bond between the child and the pet irritates the father. The bonding between son and dog reeks of contaminating emotions to the strong male who wishes to purge companionship for the true calling of domination and control. Fathers (as even Rakel mentions in "Den gula väskan") are the absolute boss, the male neutral center of the world and society, and family will, in all circumstances, follow. As the father must be centered in the masculine logic the odd peripheral and enclosed relationship of dog and son begins to aggravate and annoy. When the father brings the news that he has gotten a promotion, he makes it clear the family will move and leave the dog behind. Lucas despite his fears of the father confronts him: "På torsdagen ville Lucas veta varför Harkranten inte fick följa med. Därför att direktören hade två katter. Och?"¹¹⁸. When the family starts the drive to the new home, the father becomes so enraged from having to take the dog with them that he stops the car, throws the dog out, and drives away. Later on both the father and the mother will claim this had to be done since the dog bit the father, something that occurred since the father was being physically forceful (and most likely hurting) the dog. Lucas wonders what to do in this situation:

Och om han bad dem att stanna? Om han skrek åt dem att stanna och öppna dörren och sprang ut... För gott, för att aldrig mera komma tillbaka. Han såg på mamma. Varför sa hon inget?... Då fick väl han säga något....Rösten hade också sjunkit ned: förlamad, sjunken,

¹¹⁷

Ibid.

¹¹⁸

Lygia Bojungo, 2004, p. 29

fast så djupt där nere I Lucas att den aldrig någonsin skulle komma upp... Till slut sökte pappa Lucas blick I backspegeln ¹¹⁹.

The father and mother go back and forth on how the act that has taken place, leading to Lucas finally finding his voice, a force of himself: “ - Nej, faktiskt inte, sa mamma. Särskilt inte efter det som hände I dag: bita sin husse!. Lucas röst förstod att det var dags att komma tillbaka: - Det var jag som var hans husse. Pappa fortsatte...”¹²⁰. The parents turn on the radio and ignore Lucas, who wistfully thinks: “... Och när de möttes igen skulle de krama varandra av hjärtans lust”¹²¹. Bojunga showcases the mother as complicit in the father's actions. The mother plays out the logic of the masculine dominion and all realities must be held sway under the realities created by the male. Armand de Bonneval, in her writings of the machismo culture, underscores this narrative of Bojunga and details the overt tendency of women in Brazil to become enmeshed and complicit in the way that men perform and display their oppressions¹²². Whitehead gets to the heart of the confusions that can occur when members of spheres of oppressions become sightlines for the spheres of privilege: “One cannot assume that all men are oppressors (of women) or that all women are victims (of men). While some feminist would concur with such a view many would not.”¹²³. The narrative scene of the explanation of the dog, is a witness to the shift in identification of the mother from oppressed to oppressor. The mother performs a spontaneous shift and assists the father in the commission of a heinous act of oppression against their son. The feminine becomes entangled and captured by the patriarchy in its deceptions. Not even the outcast from male system, the feminine escapes. This is a major unsettling to Lucas as he wonders why this shift has occurred and is uncertain where to turn if even those in the fields of repressions can find solace in one another. To further rupture Lucas from connecting with the reality of the desertion of the dog, along with the disappearance of the mother into the oppressions of the patriarchy, the father engages in the gaslighting of Lucas. Per Psychology Today on this term : “ Gaslighting is a tactic in which a person or entity, in order to gain more power, makes a victim question their reality.”¹²⁴ The father speaks about the incident of the dog's abandonment in a way to confuse Lucas, telling blatant lies, which

¹¹⁹ Ibid. p. 32

¹²⁰ Ibid. p. 33

¹²¹ Ibid. p. 34

¹²² Philippe Armand de Bonneval, " Council Of Hemispheric Affairs (COHA), 2016

¹²³ Stephen M. Whitehead, 2006, p. 46

¹²⁴ Stephanie A. Sarkis, "11 Warning Signs of Gaslighting", *Psychology Today*, January 22 (2017)

the mother (perhaps a little unknowingly) enables and seconds. Language, which creates reality, is only accessible to the male, all others must submit to the reality created in the male discourse.¹²⁵

This total abandonment is the climatic narrative moment that Bojunga has detailed to motivate Lucas to a tumultuous and alternative creation of his individual identity and one which operates outside the construction and constriction of the male hegemony. The plot pivot locates a Lucas striving to perform a self outside of the male hierarchy. Lucas, weak due to his emotional attachment according to his father, finds strength in other ways. While he loses his voice when attempting to demand his father stop the car after deserting Lucas's dog, this instant of the tale creates a Lucas who speaks and rightfully calls his parents out when they pervert the situation and try to pass it off as the father being the victim. The masculinity of the father is in sociological conflict with his son. Lucas yearns to have companionship and sees it's possibility with his dog, while his father is more concerned with material status and of "being a conquer" over others and the self of empathy. The mother, who is caught between this struggle, picks the side of masculinity, leaving the male child's experience and concerns erased.

After the separation from the pet, Lucas goes into a depression, a state where he struggles to find a way to create or to stop feeling "something". When the family returns, Lucas reverts and his voice once again vanishes as the mother's voice, now, has been added to making Lucas silent and invisible. Lucas's meager striving as a person becomes erased completely. He is now, more than ever, trapped in the self circle of his father's ideals, the machismo has relented not at all. Once again he tries to create the mask and find his identity: "Han ville göra Ansiktet igen, varje gång han tog upp leran släppte han den genast igen och tänkte en konstig tanke: Ansiktet kommer att dö en gång till"¹²⁶. But the father's actions have made Lucas too afraid to create. Lucas has no way to empower himself. The thing that gave comfort is too much of a risk to make. Lucas comes to realize that it was his creativity which gave him strength. He remembers the words of his art teacher Leonor, which leads to Lucas locating once again a place for himself, and a way to create:

- Till exempel Rembrandt gav sina porträtt så mycket själ att när jag ser på dem så får jag lust att prata med dem... Aha! Han hade ju pratat ed Ansiktet – då måste det väl ha själ?

Lucas fick en otroligt lust att göra Ansiktet igen och ge det I present till Leonor... Ansiktet

¹²⁵ "Discourses refuse to acknowledge that their own partiality, their own perspectivity, their own interests and values, implicitly rely upon conceptions of women and femininity in order to maintain their 'objectivity', 'scientificity', or 'truth' – that is, their veiled masculinity". Elizabeth Grosz, *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction*, Routledge 1990 pg. 180.

¹²⁶ Lygia Bojunga, 2004, p. 35

kan inte dö igen om jag ger det till Leonor, tänkte han, och om jag gör allt som jag gjorde den där kvällen kommer Ansiktet bli likadant”¹²⁷. The memory of his art teacher Leonor inspires Lucas to make a new mask. A new space, the beginnings, maybe of a possible self, Lucas decides to make the mask a gift of himself to his teacher.

The next day, when Lucas attends his school's art class, he bequeaths his art teacher Leonor the mask as a gift. As the class ends Leonor speaks to Lucas as a self, an individual with a identity all his own: “Det var första gången som Leonor pratade med honom på det viset, så där som vuxna pratar om viktiga saker med varandra”¹²⁸. This gives Lucas a glimmer of hope that he may be able to express his pains and sufferings, to finally be able to state what he's been through and who he may become. The mask, the work of art, gives Lucas a point to begin himself: “- Det kom till en kväll när jag var ensam hemma, Mamma och pappa hade gått på teater och... och jag... Men du, tycker du verkligen om, det?”¹²⁹.

Bojunga's narrative point is that Lucas once more has been severed from the self and unable to find the voice to locate even the beginnings of an identity not wholly determined by those around him. The voice has been cut off by Lucas embedding his father's demands, the male hegemony, which requires Lucas to be silent and stoic. The machismo norm of being "tough" and stoic rears its head again in Lucas's inability to speak of his sorrow.

As mentioned before, Claudio in “Min Vän målaren” does not have this issue, but Lucas does. Lucas, however, now feels almost safe enough to speak to Leonor about his fears and sorrows. Leonor encourages his creativity, and has shown respect, which is in contrast to his parent's gaslighting and their demands that he succumb totally to the patriarchal language and the hierarchies they perform.

Unfortunately Leonor soon becomes complicit in the father's, and the patriarchies, schemes.

Luca's father, when he arrives to pick Lucas from the art class, begins a brash and obvious seduction of Lucas's teacher: “Pappa hade inte alls bråttom i väg.”¹³⁰ The clichéd and kitschy seduction by the father unfolds lethally in front of Lucas as his own feelings have been stirred by the teacher and have now grown to an insurmountable infatuation. Even in the face of Luca's father's awkward, but obviously working, seduction Lucas begins a plan to lay his romantic feelings at his teacher's feet. Planning to admit his feeling to the teacher with a card Lucas finds his campaign

¹²⁷ Ibid. p. 36

¹²⁸ Ibid. p. 39

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid. p. 41

circumvented when his father drives him to class and insists on walking him into school: “- Jag följer med. - Nej...”¹³¹ Lucas knows what is about to occur: “Plötsligt vaknade Nångting till. Det var ett tag sedan Nångonting gjorde ont sist, det hade legat och vilat någongstans I Lucas”¹³². The father continues his weird and devastating seduction, and Lucas finally grasps the courage to intervene: “- Vad var det här! Vad gjorde pappa med Leonor?... Halva Lucas blev jättearg, hade pappa överfallit Leonor? Men en annan del av Lucas ville se hur pappa gjorde för att erövra Leonor. Hon hade slutat spjärna emot och verkade vilja krama pappa. Vad lång han var! Så stor och stark!”¹³³. Lucas meets a crisis in the illuminating horrors of this scene; he is both repulsed and angry at his father's forcefulness, but also admires it and wants to learn how to mimic it. This echoes the beginning scene of Bojunga's novel, where Lucas attempts to imitate his father's posturing before the mirror, and Lucas causally reflects the desire and revulsion to share in the overdetermined Male Hegemony. Luca's main conflict in “Sex gånger Lucas”, as Nikolajeja notes as well, is that Lucas has a discordant image of himself, and desiring to embrace his father's image while simultaneously being greatly repulsed and disgusted with this being of the male¹³⁴. Lucas both abhors and marvels at his father's masculinity and the powers of oppression and control it has. Finally embracing part of the empty power of the machismo the chapter ends with Lucas lying to his mother. This lie gives the father his authority of control and leaves Lucas with his mother as the father fulfils his seduction and goes on a date with Leonor: “- Var är pappa? - Han ska äta med direktören I kväll. Lucas sköt undan tallriken och satt kvar och tänkte på hur det såg ut på terrassen där pappa var och åt med Leonor”¹³⁵. Deceit is a means of control, and the mother having abandoned Lucas to the sphere of the authoritarian control of patriarchy now becomes a brunt of the systemic as Lucas manifests what this Male association may mean.

Lucas desires to be the father who gets, but is repulsed as well by the grasping, and ultimately destroying father. A dual and contradictory position. The masculine hegemony gives full power to those who have no power to create the self and instead just internalize its deceptive logic. As "Changing Masculinities in Latin America" notes about another aspect of this always contrary functioning of the Male domination: "The father in Latin American culture has often been a contradiction in the culture; the father as a figure is suppose to be distant, but constantly there."¹³⁶ Lucas now resides in a similar situation of duality; he feels pain at his father's behavior, but lies for him anyway. Lucas's wants what his father has and is unsure of this desire. Whitehead notes "... a

¹³¹ Ibid. p. 44

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid. p. 46

¹³⁴ Maria Nikolajeja, 2009, p. 152

¹³⁵ Lygia Bojunga, 2004, p. 47

¹³⁶ Matthew C. Gutmann, 2003, p. 44

key factor in men needing to control is a lack of confidence and inner security about their masculinity, maleness and sexuality”¹³⁷. Lucas's situation is an inverted example of this theory.

Lucas suffers terribly due to his father enforcing a role onto him, and also wishes to embrace this deadly power by breaking everything that gives comfort to him without much care. The power the father wields over Lucas (both cultural and legal) instills an overriding feeling of the powerless to speak up, and, as the mother previously did, Lucas ultimately is confused enough by the deadly seduction of power to become complicit in his father's behavior. This complicit nature however is not one Lucas enjoys, but one which he succumbs too due to the fact that his search for the self is undermined by the inadequate and the undeserved power of his father as bearer of the power of male privilege. This deadly power, which belittles Lucas, also calls out longingly to him. Both the reluctance of his complicity in his father's affairs and his desire to dance are empathized in Lucas's daydream, which follows shortly after his father has seduced Leonor. Lucas starts to daydream that he is able to get back his old mask, “*Ansiktet*”, and by wearing it Lucas gains the ability to do the things he wants on a magical balcony of his fantasy:

Lucas gick ofta till Terrassen. Ibland för att dansa med Leonor (fast då och då var det med mamma... och om pappa ropade på henne viskade hon till Lucas att de gott kunde låta honom vänta), ibland för att leka med Harkranken... Ibland för att avslöja pappa... Lucas rättar till masken: - Om jag var du skulle jag inte gå dit. - Varför inte det? - Varför ska du gå dansa med pappa om han inte tycker om dig?... han tycker om Leonor. Mamma tittar på Lucas. Och utan att blinka berättar han: - Jag såg alltihop... Och så såg jag pappa erövra Leonor. Du skulle ha sett honom, hur han knäppte upp blusen och kysste henne... och när han säger till dig att han ska äta middag med direktören hittar han bara på.¹³⁸

Lucas makes an image of the emancipated self, seeking out his own world, where he is able to resurrect the broken mask and express his own identity. Lucas finds the strength, in the open space of the imaginary, to tell the truth. In the freed place of the open self the father in his world is unable to use his authority over Lucas as well as Leonor and the mother.

Lucas, in this daydream of the freed self, dances and invites his mother to dance. He beacons the mother to flow in a dance which ignores the traps of the patriarch, and the father, and join in the fluid space of liberated creativity. Dancing, just as creativity, as it is used throughout “*Sex gånger*

¹³⁷ Stephen M. Whitehead, 2006, p. 155

¹³⁸ Lygia Bojunga, 2004, p. 54

Lucas”,¹³⁹ illustrates the activation of freedom and entering into a fluid openness which escapes the static environments of Patriarchical identity. Lucas, in open space given in imagination, dances a free space and therefore enters the possibility of the released identity. Lucas invites his mother to dance with him. To join him in the open fluid space, free from the terrible constraints, and deceitful restrictions imposed by the male hegemony. Lucas desires not to be a male savior to the mother, but to invite her into an open place which escapes the hallowing out of her own agency. Lucas dreams a possibility of his mother being free alongside him.

As the novel nears its ending, Lucas’s mother decides to leave her husband, with the help of a now visible and self-aware Lucas. The two are able to move to the countryside, and Lucas finds a peace in his growing awareness and his disengagement from the demands of a toxic and destructive masculinity : “Det var så vacket!... Han gick dit och hälsade på och blev lite kompis... där kände Lucas sig fri och lycklig...”¹⁴⁰. This bliss is however soon threatened when the mother abruptly decides to return to the father, much to Lucas's dismay. The Mother explains: “-Och om jag ska vara ärlig, Lucas... Jag saknar pappa fruktansvärt mycket. Om jag ska vara fullständigt ärlig så kan jag inte leva utan honom”¹⁴¹. After this short soliloquy Lucas sits in dumfounded silence: “Han sa inte heller något mer”¹⁴², Lucas finally finds the voice which is necessary, a self which has to be and which cannot return to its own destruction in the patriarchy. This is the narrative line tied up by Bojunga which details space to readers where to seek real power. The power to create the self: “- Det är alltid han som räknas, bara han! Ska det alltid vara så?. Mamma tappade hakan. - Du tänker bara på pappa! Du gör alltid som han vill! Men jag då?”¹⁴³. Lucas knows only one outcome is possible to keep the self he has just begun to create and in frustration and anger he dashes from his mother's side. Running into the countryside from the fear and anger he feels towards his mother's betrayal to the male dominion, and who will return to a place which will only obliterate both her and him, Lucas suddenly finds himself lost in the surrounding woods: “Som för att springa ifrån Nångting...En ryslig känsla kom krypande: tänkt om varje steg han lyckades ta ledde längre från stigen?”¹⁴⁴. Lost in both forest and thought, Lucas wails out in despair: “...nu släppte han fram en urgammal gråt, en storgråt som bara var rädsla och ännu mer rädsla. En jag-skulle-skämmas-ihjäl-om-pappa-såg-mig-nu-gråt. En gråt som var så van att själjas att den hade blivit alldeles konstig, ömsom skrik, ömsom gny. Men ut kom den”¹⁴⁵. Lucas teeters on the edge of his self. Still circling

¹³⁹ This narrative scene mirrors the dance sequence at the beginning of the novel where Lucas dances an escape of the father's shaming of his fears and emotions.

¹⁴⁰ Lygia Bojunga, 2004, p. 59

¹⁴¹ Ibid. p. 60

¹⁴² Ibid. p. 61

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 61-62

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 64

about some overwhelming feeling for the father's approval, Lucas comes to an impasse. Bojunga, at this point, brings us to a narrative of lost. Lucas wishes to find certainty in both father and mother, but realizes he cannot do so as certainty only resides in the domination of the male hierarchy. Lucas confronts the point that becoming certain can only be created within himself, but there is no certainty of the self, only a tentative place of possibilities of the self. Lucas, now is lost to all certain worlds, and finds the place where all selves must start. Lucas begins an imagining, and enters a world in his mind where he deals with his situation and the turning point inside himself. Lucas begins to stage a play in the woods, starring the dog: "Han såg rätt, ja, han måste se rätt! Lucas hjärta bultade. Han kunde inte tro att Nånting som hade gjort så ont i honom nu var utanför honom, framme på scenen. Harkranken kom in på scenen. Han släppte kappen och föll ned på alla fyra... Han blev sig själv, Harkranken, i bara pälsen."¹⁴⁶ The empty "something", the embodiment of the fear and anxiety the father creates by pushing Lucas into unattainable masculine standards and its certainties, finds combat with the imagined dog, bearer of companionship, connection, and joy: "Nånting drog sig bakåt... Det var för sent att varna, Harkranken var fast, varför kom jag hit... och såg den här pjäsen!". The dog, as well as the imagined play, ends up fading away, leading to Lucas making a realization: "Harkranken på väg att försvinna i Dimmans famn, Nånting på väg att försvinna... både två... sakta på väg att dö... pjäsen var slut."¹⁴⁷ Lucas, finds a space for a birth of the self, freed by the imagined combat (referred to as a play), with the overdetermined masculine requires of the hierarchies of the self: "Han tänkte och tänkte på något som han aldrig förut hade tänkt på... Hur ska jag kunna flytta tillbaka till pappa när jag inte tycker om att tycka om honom längre?"¹⁴⁸. It is this epiphany, the power which is bound to the patriarchy which, in actuality, drains all power to create the self, that stands at the crux of this battle. The patriarchy gives a certainty which closes the self, ruptures the possibilities of finding a self. Being lost is the only hope.

The final chapter of "Sex gånger Lucas" opens up with Lucas and his mother moving back in with the father. Lucas wonders how he will reinstate himself into the life with the father, which demands the Law of the Father, after the freeing and revelatory revaluations that meet him in the emancipatory space of the still forest: "Hur skulle det gå att bo med pappa igen när han inte tyckte om att tycka om pappa längre? 'God morgon, Lucas', 'god morgon, pappa' varje morgon. Och varje kväll: 'Hur är det, Lucas?' 'Det är bra, pappa'. Var det så det skulle bli? Skulle man låtsas att allting bara var bra?"¹⁴⁹. Having seen the a place where open possibly hangs in every moment of our

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 65

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 66-67

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 68

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 69

being Lucas wonders how his mother can return to horrific and claustrophobic container that the father embodies: “Var det så det var? Hade alla hennes gräl och alla hennes tårar plötsligt förvandlats till kyssar och skratt?”¹⁵⁰. The safe space for self creation, that the country side gave up so willing, is now under threat by the too many demands of the father and his solidities of the masculine. “...sedan måste han lämna friheten på gården där han trivdes så bra,...”¹⁵¹. This confused spiral of thoughts indicates, with tumultuous confusions and too many possibilities (and probably even because of them), a pathway out of the demanding singular represented in the fathers and his systems : “Han kom att tänka på Terrassen, och han mindes Ansiktet som han hade fäst i sitt eget ansikte innan han avslöjade pappa, tänkt om... Han tittade i spegeln. Pappa tittade på honom. Han tittade på vägen.”¹⁵²

Returning to school Lucas meets with Leonor again. Lucas ponders whether or not to bear his emotions to his teacher, once again, but hesitates in his remembrances of her complicities.

- Dansar ni någon annanstans nu?... Förra veckan, då?”. Lucas nearly speaks of his emotions: “- Jag gick vilse i skogen... när det var redan mörkt... Det var fruktansvärt... Men det jag ville berätta var att det var där, alltså att det var i skogen som jag förstod en grej som jag inte trodde kunde hända. Jag förstod att jag... Men innan han berättade allt han hade förställt skulle han kanske berätta att pappa hade blivit kär i mamma igen?”¹⁵³.

Leonor mirrors the father who makes those around him invisible at this narrative juncture by ignoring Lucas and his straightforward question: “- De har väl flyttat isär?... Lucas tittade spetsen på en penna... och lappen? Skulle hon inte säga mer om den?”¹⁵⁴. Hesitant about exposing and expressing his feeling, Lucas suddenly stops at this moment of understanding. His hesitance lies not in his fears of rejection or confusions of his feelings, but in a dawning realization at the collusion of the colonized consciousness of Leonor. Leonor's support will not be to Lucas's struggling self, and the emotions he wrestles to understand, but to the self-manipulating demands of the male hegemony. Lucas realizes that he cannot look to any adult to fulfill himself and must turn to the sphere of open creativity, a true dancing and lost self, Bojunga's realm of the fabulist, to embrace his identity.

150

Ibid.

151

Ibid. p. 70

152

Ibid.

153

Ibid. p.72

154

Ibid. p.73

10. Norms and the Gendering Containment of Adults

In the novels of Bojunga the adult figures more often than not dislike and disapprove of the children's behavior. The condition of disapproving behavior, due to even the most minuscule variance of children from the what is seen as proper gendering placements by children, is critiqued by Bojunga and used as a springboard for her narratives to explore the horrific consequences of the solidified hierarchical (patriarchal) system which contains and limits the spectrum of the adults gender conceptions. Bojunga in her novels shows an active concern with the extreme male conditions of Machismo norms and the adults' disapproval highlights the possible avenues for young male nonconforming behavior, as well how these narrow gendering roles of the males disastrously contain and delimit behaviors in the adult world.

Lucas's father, other than his violent and dismissive nature, manifests two systemic flaws that drive the plot in "Sex gånger Lucas", and which are founded on strict and unrelenting gendering. The first one is founded on the narrow boundaries of authority based on tyrannical parenting. Luca's father, in every event of the family, forces those around him to subordination of his person, demands, and views. Secondly this demand of the privileged male requires self-confirmation through serial infidelity, which Bojunga describes in great detail, sometimes in very comical ways. Many instances of this compulsion are present in the novel, but a very typified sequence is when Lucas's father is compelled to project his male gaze on a mother of a friend who is attending Lucas's birthday party, almost immediately after showing up to the party: " - Nu är jag här! Jag sa ju att jag skulle komma...Pappa gav Lucas paketet och fick samtidigt syn på en ung tjej I blått, vilken söt tjej! Var hon mamma till någon av Lucas kompisar? Han log mot henne..."¹⁵⁵. However, even when Bojunga develops a mocking tone to the father's infidelity, there lies a very dark tale in the rapturous, controlling desires of male obtainment. Lucas's father commits his humiliating adultery at Lucas's expense (and through the understanding of the violence of the adultery to the mother) but also the consumption of the women for his infidelities are couched in verbal attacks and manipulations to undermine his victims humanity, social standing and to damage their reality.

Lucas's father, as the neutral arbiter of the privileged male calls into question the instability of women, naturally, when these targets of his lust voice their opinions and concerns. As the broker and locus of power, Lucas's father rains doubt upon all others outside of the male position. In

¹⁵⁵

Ibid. p. 21

Lucas's mother's case, the father belittles her understandings, emotions, and intellect in his denials of his infidelity, despite the fact (as the above scene demonstrates) his flirtations, and actions, happen in the plain sight and mind of the mother's presence: "-... Du hade väl fullt upp med att flörta. - Hur kan du säga så där? Jag pratade ju inte ens med henne. Det behövdes inte. **Du** behöver inte det. Det räcker med att du tittar på dem för att de ska börja tråna... - Lucas!"¹⁵⁶ The father belittles and interrupts the mother in order to dismiss the mother's confrontation and concerns. The father, also targets Lucas by shifting the focus away from his infidelity to terrorizing Lucas, as cutting off the mother to yell at Lucas. Later in the narrative, when the mother has decided to leave her husband due to his infidelity, more detail is mined on the dismissals and denials that foreground the actions of the father: "- Förut försäkte du I alla fall smyga med dina affärer, men nu har du visst ingen skam I kroppen längre. Du flörtar med vem du vill mitt framför ögonen på mig, och säg den kvinna du inte vill flörta med."¹⁵⁷ The father decides that Lucas won't be leaving with the mother. This decision comes not due to love, but to further denial: "-Kan du fatta en gång för alla att jag inte tänker låta din löjliga svartsjuka förstöra Lucas liv"¹⁵⁸. The father denies the mothers bonding with her child, Lucas, as a loathsome and disgusting attachment: "- ...Jag tycker självklart inte att det här är någon bra idé. Och det tycker så klart inte du heller. Dessutom är du ingen småunge som måste hänga mamma I kjolarna längre."¹⁵⁹ All emotion is suspect in the clear authority of male violence and anger, and the father berates the mother for the expression of emotions outside of the male hierarchy: "-Ska du börja med känslomässig utpressing mot Lucas nu också?...Mamma lät honom vara. Utan ett ord gick hon..."¹⁶⁰. The father's repugnance to Lucas' and the mother's relationship showcases the bizarre male aversion to empathic bounding and sympathetic attachment of any kind.

Just as with the mother, the father's diminutive listing of possible (hard and male) emotions encompasses the bounding and emotional connection Lucas tendered with his dog: "Pappa blev arg: - Ska Lucas aldrig tröttna på den där byracken? Och han ångrade sig: jag borde ha köpt en rashund!"¹⁶¹. That Lucas and the dog love each other, and miss each other, infuriates the father. Here lies the pivotal point of denials and containments in the systemic of toxic masculinity; a grand denunciation and imposing refutation of the larger spectrum of emotions and expression of gender possible in the human. The father cycles in a small and constant mood of anger and aggression, and even the slightest behavior his male posturing deems feminine is less than acceptable, but repugnant and perverse. This severing from the spectrum of emotions is combined with an impulsive

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 16

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 55

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 56

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 58

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid. p. 28

infidelity, which is founded not on human connection, but a manipulative nature to secure and impose a power imbalanced relationship between himself and those below him (women and Lucas). Male affirmation of its control rejects the soft connections of Lucas's fuller (and healthy) relationships with his dog and his mother. The father faced with the facts of derivation from the male norm elicits only a state of constant anger and a concentrated abhorrence of the display of affection of any kind. His binary world view is expressed by his objectifying of affairs, treating women as not people (subjects) but consumable conquests (objects to be owned and used). Lost in a world severed by the patriarchy from exploration of connection and empathy the father must harbor a rejection of the wide range of emotional expressions and land finally only on a state of constant anger and violence. Bojunga showcases the father as the patriarchy at its worst: full of rage, resentment, and power hungry. Owing, destroying, and consuming all, even others which circle about.

The painter in "Min Vän Målaren" is one of the few adults in Bojunga's work that is portrayed sympathetically. This is best illustrated in the scene when Claudio tells his family of his precocious crush on an older girl, to which his family hardily mocks him for. When Claudio later finds that his crush is over (and possibly occurred due to confusions with his wondrous attachment to her red dress), he still engages with his emotional attachment and recounts to his friend the painter the whole tale: "... gick jag upp till min Vän Målaren... och berättade om allt som hade hänt. Han tänkte sin pipa, ställde sig vid fönstret... Sedan sa han: - Rött är verkligen en krånglig förg... För han var sådan att ifall han inte kände för att prata, så gjorde han det inte heller"¹⁶². Claudio's narration solicits two distinct, and decisively divisive reactions, from the adult world around him. Claudio's family looks at the fragile emotion and is filled with ridicule, while the painter friend ponders the brash emotion and shows a thoughtful response to Claudio's situation. This contrast of consideration vs. dismissal is accentuated in the narrative when, after the painter's suicide, Claudio attempts to talk to the adults around him about the suicide and the flurry of confused and pivoting emotions and thoughts which spring from this deadly act.

Claudio initial forays to speak to his parents about his friend's suicide, are met with causal shorthand answers, and a sprinkling of flippant judgment towards both the Painter and his girlfriend. Claudio wonders at the girlfriends sad and desperate claim the death was an accident, to which his parents reply: "-Det var hon tvungen att säga...för att ingen skulle få för sig att det var hennes skull som han tog livet av sig"¹⁶³. In reply to the youths question to why the suicide happened, the father replies: "-För att han var sjuk, pojken min... Sjuk här, sade han och knackade

¹⁶² Lygia Bojunga, 2004, p. 19

¹⁶³ Ibid. p. 27

på huvudet. Bara den som är mycket sjuk här gör vad han gjorde.”¹⁶⁴ Claudio becomes infuriated at this glib and appalling dismissal: “-Världens bästa vän! Han sade själv att åldern inte spelade någon roll om man var riktiga vänner...”¹⁶⁵. Bojunga's narrative exploration of this interchange excavates, not only the core differential in power display in patriarchies child and adult interactions, but also two underlining tangents of gender expression. Claudio openly asks questions, and is full of sad and perplexing wonder (when the question touches on curiosity). His questions are calls for tender exchange and full of a need for closure (when the questioning is about his friend's suicide). While still alive the Painter showcased a language of contemplative engagement and wondered at the spectacular mystery of Claudio's questions. This openness to wonder and difference was not lost on Claudio who quite rapidly notes that the painter seems to reside in a space of healthy masculinity. This health was often expressed in a respect for a wandering and fragile Claudio while other adults belittled and sought only to undermine the fuller space which Claudio sought out. This vigor of the open searching self which the Painter typified stood opposite to Claudio's parents who, throughout the book display disrespect to a fumbling young Claudio due to his age and the subtle strivings which the family felt fell outside of the normal ways that males confronted the growing self. This denial, focused in a refusal to confront Claudio's questions, and reflect a similar narrative pattern from the father in “Sex gånger Lucas” - a dislike of a child striving towards companionship, compassion, communication, and friendship. An intense denial to all that lies outside of the strong and enclosed of the male hegemony.

The Painter, who is kind and follows the open spectrum of the human, does not fully resist the machinations of the dominate masculine ideology and, like Claudio, suffers in his confrontations to the limiting boundaries, and judgments, of the adult world. Tantamount to this suffering are Bojunga's narratives of the Painter's past as a political prisoner. This horrific past of the Painter results in such severe depression (and feelings of loneliness in the world) that he ends his life. This tragedy is worsened by the fact that the other adults are indifferent to the situation (Bojunga, here, ties the a certain denial and unwillingness to confront the situation to both a political agenda and the overt dismissals of the authoritarian Patriarchy.). Bojunga paints an adult world that is not only unkind, but ignorant, and shows that it is not just children that suffer through the forced binaries of gender expression. The Painter, whether it was due to loneliness, past trauma, or mental health struggles, could not reach out to the adult world for help as this world was formed and formulated on the violent denials and actions of the patriarchy. The violence of forcing a limit to emotional and expressive connection leads a world founded on incapacity and cruelty for others in vulnerable situations. Here is where Claudio is narratively exposed as stronger, and fuller, than

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 28

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 28

the adults: he rejects the silence and binary world of the adult sphere and creates, by himself, a released space where he is unafraid to ask and to try to understand: “Jag tror till och med att ifall jag kan fortsätta att tycka om varje `varför` som dyker upp, så kommer jag att till sist att förstå dem, ett och ett I taget”¹⁶⁶. By asking why in an unashamed manner, Claudio accepts the complex world and rejects the toxic nature of indifference; he like Lucas, must find away by himself free from the adult containment.

11. Fable and Masculinity

In “Sex gånger Lucas” final major scene:

Lucas sjönk ned I sätet. Han slöt ögonen. Och öppnade den röda dörren. Som vanligt var hela terassen upplyst och väntade bara på honom... Musiken. Skåpet med Ansiktet. Harkranken. Leonor... Mamma (I likadan klänning). Till och med pappa stod I ett hörn, han som aldrig annars var med på Terassen... Han (Lucas) såg på Harkranken och på pappa. Men längtan på den ene, utan längtan på den andre... Lucas kom fram till dem och såg ömsint på dem båda (Leonor and his mother). Men det enda han sa till dem var: jag trodde att vuxna visste bättre¹⁶⁷.

Lucas is now beyond anger at his mother and Leonor and begins a recognition of the insidious ideological trap that they have fallen prey to in patriarchy as manifested in the toxic father. Lucas craves neither exploitation nor inhibition, but connection and communication. Neither the teacher nor the mother, trapped as they are in the small and severed humanity of the patriarchy propounded by the father, can give this to Lucas and a moment of bonding union is grasped upon in Lucas's mind for reconnection with the dog he loved and with which he shared an accepting and loving companionship with. Grasping the ideal of connection and acceptance which the dog represents, Lucas, now, can separate himself finally and fully from the complicit abandonments of the women and the abuse containments of the father.

Too confront and separate from these insidious adults, Lucas dives once more into the freeing open space of his play and imagination. A creative space where Lucas comes to grant to

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 75

¹⁶⁷ Lygia Bojunga, 2004, p. 75-76

himself finally the powers he needs. Staring at the radiant epiphany of rejecting the father Lucas wonders that he never thought before of this doorway of escape. To dash over the threshold and reject the macho world and its violent, suppressing nature. To run towards finding himself, not to be stuck in others smallness - in a word to come to the realization that he “does not like his father” nor his toxic masculine behavior. Now Lucas stands in opposition to his fearful self of the first chapter, who only attempts an emulation of the father. Severed from the poisoned world of the containments of the dominate hegemony, Lucas will look at the vast vistas of the possible and seek out himself.

The final narrative moment finds Lucas on an imagined balcony, a scene where Lucas divines the deadly nature of those adults who have been about him. The patriarchy's noxious or enabling behavior captured by the deadly and small reign of the contained self is now brushed aside, and Lucas sees, even with his doubts, flaws, uncertainties, and questions, that now is the time to shape something else for himself. A final opening to express emotion and feelings (which began in the woods and found its home in the epiphany of the toxicity of the over-determined masculine self) does not feel insecure to Lucas any longer. He has rejected his father's ideals and seen that he can carve a space for himself, and in order to do so he rejects the dysfunction of the adults in his life and the grand dysfunctions of the Male Hegemony which had capture them all in its trap.

This imaginary creative space of Lucas harkens to the fabulist elements utilized in Bojunga's narrative structure. The dog has been transformed from a longing memory into a fabulist figure who can resist and point to other alternatives. The balcony becomes the staging of an fantastic realm where Lucas is able to overcome the vulnerable state that seeks out the patriarchy and becomes the open arena to the many possibilities of the self.

The Fable as traditional storytelling and narrative structure is a strong element in Bojunga's novels. Bojunga's narrative formulation in using the fabulist form is to secure an narrative mechanism to highlight the operations of the sexual-political and to have the textual operations of the Fable excavate and undermine the hidden normative sexual-political machinery of the patriarch . Bojunga utilizes fabulist elements as a narrative method to generate a creative, open space which breaks the containments and singularities of standardized sexual-political norms. The mechanisms and language of the fable, and how gender is often constructed in the narrative arch of storytelling of the fabulist, at times seems only an character inner-monologue, but its operation functions for Bojunga primarily as a metaphor space symbolizing the creative utopia world, where gender performance is open to its reality of being fluid and free. Bojunga creates a subversion of the fable, and elements of magical realism, to create a storytelling space in her novels which provide a safe narrative environment by which the child, not only as character in her works, but, also, and more

importantly, as reader, can to use to engage with gender roles outside of the sphere of negative and contained hegemonic masculinity.

Though “Den Gula Väskan” cleaves more to the fable structure, compared to other works of Bojunga’s which adhere more consistently to a standard realist model, the novels “Min vän målaren” and “Sex gånger Lucas” incorporate many fantastical elements within their story format. Mostly the fabulist elements in these novels are obtained through the narrative mechanism of the dream sequences (Claudio) or daydreaming sequences (Lucas), however, even given this, the narrative flavor expressed in these dreamlike segments mark a fantastical ingredient in the textual texture of the novel. This marks the fabulist narrative structure of Bojunga as less dream-sequence, then as a mental landscape of the Creative explicated by the realms of the Fantastic. This strain of narrative is a blending where fabulist elements of the fantasy are fused intimately to the banalities of ordinary, unjust life. This function of the fabulist and fantastic element appears strongly in all three books of which have been discussed.

Bojunga blurs the lines of Fabulist fiction into a fantastic realism. We see this narrative fabulist movement strongly in Bojunga's work when Rakel in the first chapter of “Den Gula Väskan” fantasies a rooster, Alfonso, who wishes only an escape from the clutches of a Hen house where he is asked to take the position of an authoritarian leader. In the third chapter, when Rakel and Alfonso meet for the first time, i.e. Rakel as author meets her creation outside of her story, Rakel quickly learns that the fictional character’s story-line continues beyond the writer’s pen: “- Schh, tala lägre, jag har flytt. - Det vet jag, inte sant? Det var ju jag som fick dej att fly från hönsgården... - Dom hämtade tillbaka mej för att ta hand om alla dom där hönorna igen.”¹⁶⁸ Alfonso the rooster and Rakel meet now as strangers, but Rakel insists that she has created him and knows the full arch and format of his story. Alfonso however points to a tale that has continued without her commands. He recounts a story of humans who forced him back to the farm to take care and to rule over the hens. Face with the burden of controlling, however, Alfonso dives into a search for his soul and meaning:

- Jag tänkte tills jag nästan blev galen. Till slut kom jag fram till att jag skulle kämpa för mina idéer... Jag kallade samman mina femton hönor och bad dom att hjälpa mej. Jag förklarade att jag var så trött på att behöva ge order och kontraorder till dom både natt och dag. Men dom sa: ‘Du är vår härskare. Det är du som fattar alla beslut åt oss’. Vet du Rakel, att dom la inte ett enda ägg eller pickade ett enda korn; inte en enda grej gjorde dom

¹⁶⁸ Lygia Bojunga, 1984, p. 32

utan att först komma till mej och fråga, 'Får jag? Tillåter du?'... jag svarade, 'Hör på... det är ditt liv, besluta så som du tycker är bäst', brast dom ut i gråt¹⁶⁹.

Alfonso speaks openly to Rakel, discussing his disinterest in being the king of the castle. How control and authority is antithetical to the free self that Alfonso craves for himself as well as others. The conversations mirror Rakel's discussion with her brother previously in the story where Rakel was confronted with the asymmetric dynamics of power in gendering. In the patriarchy the male is centre and deciding, the one who calls all the shots. The Hen house system is detailed in a similar, patriarchal system. However, while Rakel has described toxic masculinity and tyrannical patriarchy where the male imposes a set of rules and standards, the tale of Alfonso's reflects a much more insidious male dominated system where the Hens have succumbed to colonized consciousness. Internalizing patriarchal formulations male hegemony becomes manifest as a form of toxic femininity which reflects the dictates of the patriarchy: "- Dom sa att dom tyckte det var så arbetsamt att tänka"¹⁷⁰. Since the Hens have been told by humans that the Rooster, a king, is the one who dishes out all the orders, they have become so docile that they no longer even know how to think for themselves. They have made themselves helpless, needing the rooster to tell them everything to do. The male hegemony forces inaction and invisibility on the female and with this same internalization of this singular male ideology the females become inactive and invisible to themselves.

Alfonso's Hen house echoes as a fable of both political struggle and the bounded double of the oppressed Other (women): "- Jag satte mej på en pinne och skrek: 'Jag vill inte ge order ensam. Jag vill ha en hönsgård med fler tuppar. Jag vill att hönorna bestämmer tillsammans med tupparna'. - Toppen!"¹⁷¹. Rakel is overjoyed in Alfonso's desire for a more democratic, equal hen house which is opposed to the singular male authority system. This fabulist narrative line frees all in the political and the gendered circulations of power. This bound double systems of oppressions, sexual-political, is noted by Toijer-Nilsson who sees the narrative fable-device and allegorical themes as a function of the struggles of Bojunga's work as it attempts to work against both the oppressions of the other and the brutal dictatorship Brazil which held power during Bojunga's younger years and early writing.¹⁷²

The hen house Alfonso functions as an metaphor of escape (freedom) from both the oppressive role of the father (male) and the country's myriad displays of dysfunctional totalitarianism. This critique of authoritarian ruling (humans force Alfonso to be the king, Alfonso

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 33

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 34

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ying Toijer-Nilsson, 2000, p. 181

wants the hen house to have more than one rooster) shows the strong bounding of oppressive structures played out in the family and the nation-state. Alfonso, at last, is a male who rejects the idea of patriarchy (Alfonso wants the hens to make decisions alongside the roosters) wishing openness in nation, state, community, family and the individual. Rakel's joy at this statement embraces this open space and those who seek it out.

Seeing this bounded double of oppression, and embracing the open creative space, Rakel decides to help Alfonso hide from the humans of the Hen House. She asks him to cooperate and he listens: "Jag behövde inte be honom två gånger. Han gjorde en fantastisk flygtur... och landade i väskan"¹⁷³. This scene demonstrates healthy expression of masculinity from Alfonso. While he still wishes to struggle against the forces of binding, to be a fighter (he wants to fight for his beliefs), he seeks cooperation and active interaction to achieve this goal. To fight the oppressive is to cooperate, to work as community. Alfonso manifests the entire opposite of what Rakel has previously been exposed to as the masculine. The negative masculine behavior of the patriarchy which contains and rejects nurturing and communication.

The seeking for an open communal interaction, which evades the closures of the hegemony of the socio-political, is further emphasized when the living Umbrella is introduced. Alfonso speaks for the Umbrella when Rakel tries to learn the Umbrella's story, which Rakel, having lived with the male voice which dominates and disappears the female, quite readily accuses of Alfonso of benevolent sexism in his speaking for the umbrella: "- Jag talar inte med dej, Alfonso. Låt henne svara själv. - Men det hjälper inte att du frågar henne.... - Bzzzzztctctctctctc''... - Sa jag inte att hennes språk är mycket komplicerat"¹⁷⁴. Alfonso quickly notes he must listen to what the umbrella says first in order to speak. He details his recognition of the voice and space of Umbrella, and only is communicating to help her to find her place. Alfonso must have community with Umbrella. Alfonso does not speak for the Umbrella, but listens, understands, and attempts to empathize. He does not steal space from the female identifying Umbrella, but attempts a understanding to create it more fully.

The second rooster the reader meets in "Den Gula Väskan" is Skräcken, Alfonso's cousin. He is a rooster that is used in cock fights. Toijer-Nilsson discusses how Skräcken's compulsive behavior and the implication of him undergoing surgery so that he'd want to continually fight (even under the likelihood of death) is an example of the fable being a way for Bojunga to critique, not only the social oppressive dynamics of the male hierarchy, but political oppression as well¹⁷⁵.

¹⁷³ Lygia Bojunga, 1984, p. 38

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 49

¹⁷⁵ Ying Toijer-Nilsson, 2000, p. 181

We first meet Skräcken by Alfonso recognizing his relative: “-Titter där, Skräcken! Kom Rakel så pratar vi med honom! Han blev försträcktligt upprörd.”¹⁷⁶ Alfonso speaks of how the humans who owned the Hen house groomed Skräcken for cock fighting since he was hatched:

- Ändå sen han var pytteliten hade dom bestämt att han skulle bli stridstupp, på samma sätt som dom bestämde att jag skulle bli tupp I hönsgården. Du vet hur dom är dom där människorna. Dom vill bestämma allt för alla, så dom började träna Skräcken...det kan vara påhitt, att dom sydde fast resten av hans tankar med björntråd. På så viss skulle hans tankar inte kunna bryta sej loss. Han fick bara tänka: 'jag måste alltid vinna'¹⁷⁷ .

The humans who, in the words of Alfonso, want to decide for everyone, fit the description of once again, the law of the father. Now, however, it is law of the father in family and the political. When Alfonso meets his cousin the exchange becomes even more telling:“- Min kära kusin! Vad jag har saknat dej! Skräcken blev alldeles försträckt och istället för att krama om Alfonso, sa han: - Jag slår vad... att jag slår dej I en strid. Han hade redan intagit stridsposition. Då var det Alfonso som blev rädd...- Vad menar du Skräcken?... Det här är min vän Rakel”¹⁷⁸. Skräcken's behaviour continues, before Alfonso adds: “- Varför vill du slåss mot mej? - För att visa att jag enkelt kan slå dej. - Jaha, men låtsas då som om vi redan har slagits och att du slog mej... Mästare! Mästare! Skräcken blev häpen: - Bryr du dej inte om, om du förlorar? - Inte ett dugg... Jag har inte sett dej på åratal och jag har saknat dej.”¹⁷⁹

Alfonso's confrontation with Skräcken underlies the strange compulsions necessary to the male hegemony. While Skräcken only wants to fight and prove his strength, Alfonso does not care if he is the strongest of the two or not. Alfonso's attitude rejects not only the violence of patriarchy, but is an overall rejection of the limited sense of physical violence as power. Alfonso seeks a truer sense of power, one which is needed to attempt to create a self outside of the normative. The limit of strength, and its actual weaknesses, is reflected by the compulsive, destructive masculinity which Skräcken embodies in the narrative. Alfonso is positioned to exemplify the positive portrayal of healthy masculinity, and is a foil to the masculinity that is the product of oppression and metaphorical brainwashing of the authoritarian regime. The fable and play encapsulated in the workings of the dialogue of Rakel's fantasy tales underscores the destructive nature of violent patriarchy verses the open field of the possible, more peaceful masculinity. Alfonso, seeking a field

¹⁷⁶ Lygia Bojunga, 1984, p. 52

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 53-54

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 54-55

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 55

of companionship and loving family bounds, knows that violence and physical strength are a limitation that strangles the self.

Skräcken eventually dies in a cock fight, despite the fact that even the Umbrella tries to save him: “När dom fick se Paraplyet som klängde sej fast vid Skräcken, brast dom ut I skratt. Dom sa till henne att gå sin väg, annars skulle Järnkammaren göra slut på henne¹⁸⁰”. In the world of violent patriarchy, the female is ridiculed and seen as weak even in the act trying to save another. When Skräcken is killed Alfonso goes into mourning: “Han gick därifrån med raska steg. För att ingen skulle se hur nedslagen han var, gick han och tittade I marken”¹⁸¹. Yet even a grand loss, a deep hurt can becomes strength, a call to becoming. Alfonso confides in Rakel that this despair of loss has taught him what he wants to do with his plans for fighting for his beliefs: “-Jag ska gå ut I världen och kämpa för att ingen ska tillåtas sy fast någon annans tankar”¹⁸². Just as Bojunga has given Lucas, narrative freedom through the hard battle to be himself in losing the Patriarchal Father, Alfonso must lose the propagandist political brother before discovering what it is that has caused his grief and what will drive him to free himself in the political. He realizes he wants to fight against force, oppression, of how people are pushed, and contained to think. Alfonso unfolds in Bojunga's narrative as the fabulist critique of political oppression. Oppression where open thoughts are banned and the creative, fluid self is prohibited. Skräcken is the narrative reflection of the sexual-political disease of the binary self the of gender performance. A containment in the brainwashing of enforced masculinity norms which cuts potential, creativity and the open political self. Alfonso responds, and becomes, the critique based on the open and creative self.

12. The Alternative Family And Escape from the Binary

The fantastical element in “Den gula väskan” comes to a major turning point when the Umbrella breaks: “-Hon är fullständigt sönderslagen. Hon kan inte ens röra sig!”¹⁸³. So Alfonso and Rakel take the Umbrella to a reparations shop: “- Här är den!. Butiken hette: REPARATIONSHUSET”¹⁸⁴. Rakel steps into the store, discovering it is run by a family: “Flickan läste läxor, kvinnan lagade mat, mannen lagade en klocka och gamilingen lagade en kastrull”¹⁸⁵. Bojunga's first descriptive view shows a family occupied with what is often depicted as the normal representational image of a nuclear family. Yet, in a sudden flash, caused by the disappearing

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 87

¹⁸¹ Ibid. p. 89

¹⁸² Ibid. p. 102-103

¹⁸³ Ibid. p. 104-105

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 105

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

chords of a song echoing throughout the house, the family abruptly changes the chores each was carrying out:

Men så var inte klockans musik. Den slutade tvärt, utan någon som helst förvarning. Det gjorde också flickan, mannen, gamlingen och kvinnan... Mannen hade stannat vid spisen, gamlingen vid kartan, flickan vid paraplyet, och kvinnan vid kastrullen. De tittade inte ends upp en gång till, utan mannen satte genast igång med matlagningen.¹⁸⁶

The girl-child of the family is now tasked with fixing the Umbrella, prompting Rakel to directly enquire about the habits of the family:

*“... Jag viskade till flickan: - Varför håller han (the father) på och lagar mat?. Hon tittade häpet på mig: - Vadå?... Tja därför att hon har lagat mat ganska länge och han och farfar har reparerat en massa saker. Jag har redan studerat en tag. Det var dags att byta helt enkelt... För att inge ska tycka att han eller hon får hålla på för länge med samma sak, och för att inge ska tycka att det han eller hon gör är sämre än vad dom andra gör”.*¹⁸⁷

Still tied to thinking within binary performance, and life under the ultimate authority of the law of the father, Rakel tries to understand who is the authority in this family: “-Vem är den som bestämmer? Vem är chef så att säga? - Chef? - Ja, den som bestämmer I huset. Vem är det? Din pappa eller din farfar? - Men varför måste **en** bestämma?”¹⁸⁸. This rebuttal is followed with the girl's explanation of the families structure, with the discussion being a mix of a dialogue of how true democratic systems should operate and a how equality can manifest itself within a family dynamic: “- Vi fyra. Varje dag på ett bestämt klockslag besluter vi skaer och ting. Vi har till och med, sedan en tid tillbaka, en tidpunkt då vi roar oss. Vi sätter oss vid bordet och fattar beslut om olika saker... Alla säger sin åsikt och det som de flesta tycker är bäst för gälla”¹⁸⁹.

The voting and debating system resonates definitely with the struggles for freedom of expression and speech in Brazil back when this novel was written, as Ying Toijer- Nilsson has discussed¹⁹⁰. But as a discussion between two young girls, it also illustrates the difference between the male hegemonic family where the law of the father reins supreme verses the family of egalitarianism which discusses and works communally outside of ageist and gendered inequalities.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 109

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 110

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 111

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 112

¹⁹⁰ Ying Toijer- Nilsson, 2000, p. 181

Rakel assumes, due to her family operating strongly within the mechanics of the patriarchal system, it is either the father or the grandfather who makes the decisions for the family. The girl of this *Other* family wonders why there would be a “chief”. Rakel, though struggling against the hegemony of the patriarchy, is still ideologically trapped in a binary world contra a person who has entered the fluid world where things are free, open, and constantly changing dependent on circumstance and not an authoritative structure. This fantastic fabulist sequence of Bojunga's novel, with Rakel creating this idealistic (but still possible) family, emphasizes the open space of play in the imagination, that not only gives Rakel an alternative view of a family, not run by the father's law, but also yields a world where both men and women, young and old can operate at a multitude of diverse levels and harbor a world of shared things together. This family, in the creative imaginative, is the ultimate manifestation of the escape from the binary and the entering of a free, fluid and empowering (for all) world. The store is a place for multiple self creations. It is space for the possibilities.

This window into an escape from patriarchy and binary gender performance gives Rakel an important epiphany: “Mitt liv blev bättre... Att vara flicka kunde vara lika bra som att vara pojke”¹⁹¹. The freedom and possibility of communal companionship, as demonstrated by both Alfonso and by the family who fixes the umbrella, indicates to Rakel the contained performance of family which has been imposed in the one way of performing gender of patriarchy. Now, in the family of the shop, Rakel has, by delving into the fantastical, found a way out of the restriction of the patriarchal family, and the authoritarian regime, and begins a new way of seeing in the multitudes of what it means to be a girl or a boy and a citizen. More importantly, Rakel begins the journey to the fluidity where people grow, form companionships and learn that there is no wrong way to be a man or woman in an open social order. Fable is founded on the creative, and the creative is founded in freedom, for Bojunga, and the family and the freedom of gender expression is the epitome alternative world and open field in the fantastic of creativity.

13. Conclusion

Bojunga's novels discuss gender and her narrative arches entail alternative gendering possibilities to both young males and females alike. Bojunga devises the storytelling elements of her novel, especially the three discussed novels, as an ideological deconstruction carried out on the notion of Patriarchy and Machismo, becoming a powerful narrative to replace machismo with a narrative of field of the creative as subversive fable. The discursive path of the alternative gendering

¹⁹¹ Lygia Bojunga, 1984, p. 123

fable is Bojunga's means of creating an open narrative frame to explore the different, possible ways to perform the many alternatives of an open construction of selfhood. Her critique of gender norms and her forceful, open stories of gendering lay out a narrative field for living which gives the young men and oppressed female, the opportunity of a different, open, self-creation.

In “Min vän målaren” we see Claudio, who despite his environment not approving of, and at times aggressively rejecting, his tendency to wear his heart on his sleeve, persists still in being true to himself through words and art. Claudio, despite his environments hostility, continues being himself, thinking that it is more of a shortcoming in others than in himself when these conflicts emerge.

This reading, which leads the reader towards the tenets of the open self, is accented in “Min vän målaren” in its subtle reflections on the Painter who committed suicide and the friend, Claudio, who tries to fully understand. This novel encapsulates the mixture of the creative self who struggles against the norms of the ordinary, authoritarian sociosexual-political which replicates the familial male hegemony, and the issues of who is healthy in the male world. “Min vän målaren” underscores how the rigid ideals of masculinity are present and enforced upon all and are especially are concerned with those who fall outside of its rules. Claudio’s admiration of the Painter furthers the narrative of non-acceptance of men who don’t fit into a binary, hegemonic masculine behavior and how the Painter (as all subjects may) use the excess landscape of creativity to escape these rigid societal norms. Through Claudio’s eyes Bojunga critiques an adult world, trapped in totalizing male ideology, which stigmatizes all who seek communication, empathy and emotional connection. In the world of Claudio the form of toxic masculinity intertwines the place of politics and the personal. The characters of both Claudio and the Painter inform readers of a space for being free to create the self in emotions, gender, actions and thoughts and that the constrictions of the patriarchy leads to circumventing, and therefore a damaging, of the self.

The rigid societal norms of the patriarchal are presented iconically by Lucas’s father in “Sex gånger Lucas”, who narratively embodies the majority of the essential characteristics of toxic masculinity and machismo, at times to very extreme and horrifically comically ways. The father engages in continual emotional abuse toward others in order to remain within the position of definitive authority figure which is required via the patriarchal system, and which both the mother, and later Leonor, Lucas's art teacher, enable in their embrace of this destructive ideology. This underscores the mechanism of macho culture as perpetuated by adults (who seek singular and stable systems of the self), especially those who misguidedly consider themselves rewarded by the system, and how the father, due to his containing binary views of how men should be, is led inevitably to tyranny and abuse.

Lucas, initially, at the onset of the novel, internalizes these beliefs of the male hegemony and, due to this struggle with the male-centric world throughout the novel, with his own identity and well-being. The struggle is formulated by the fact that, while the patriarchy is telling him to delete parts of himself deemed inappropriate, Lucas in his own world seeks to fulfill all parts of himself. The patriarchy requires a static and set binary of the self, whereas the excess and emotions of Lucas begin, even at the outset, to stray into the multiple and open fields of the self. Lucas finds the means of liberation through the creative mind, a space for play, the imaginative, and open field of possibility where even the most unlikely can be stumbled across in the many-sidedness of oneself. In this world of imagination, the narrative fantasy world Bojunga sets up, being lost is a creative and open space where Lucas can be brave enough to speak his own truth. Ultimately Bojunga explores this creative fantasy space to give place to Lucas finding acceptance with his own fears and grief, and comes to terms with feelings he has buried since his surroundings have discouraged him from expressing them. Lucas, in finally accepting his multitude of inner thoughts and complex feelings, rejects the father's authority and finds peace in the open arena of the self.

Both Claudio and Lucas showcase Bojunga's narrative structure which seeks a normalization of the entirety of the emotional and intellectual spectrum of the human, and the narration is sympathetic to the plight which pits the multiple possibilities of the self and gender against the surroundings of the normative gender hegemony which restrain the human. The imaginative spaces that Bojunga creates are narratives of the fantastic but more than real in confronting the narrowing places of the self that the patriarchy demands. The contained and false reality of the male is exposed in Bojunga's scathing narrative critique of the terrifyingly constricted clutch of gender norms, which gives way to the many possibilities of the creative self as alternatives to young male identifying readers.

In the imaginary character of Alfonso, Bojunga crafts an entity to explore the open field in the fantastic. By developing an imaginary companionship in Alfonso, Rakel uses creativity through the fantastic to explore healthy masculinity. Alfonso's brand of masculinity is heroism free from violence and does not come at another's subordination. He rejects being the singular authority of the hen house, and instead becomes heroes alongside Rakel; he values communicating and balanced relationships over tyranny. Empathy over anger and communication over violence. Bojunga uses this political-sexual fable combined with the wonder of open gender expression to showcase a masculinity that is based on a more kind, less hierarchical heroism. A released performance of masculinity that does not force others to bow down and that like Lucas and Claudio ultimately rejects force. This fantastic being escapes the binary of the patriarchy and authoritarianism and embarks on a journey to communication and the full spectrum of emotions and thoughts. Alfonso,

as it is noted, is still very much coded as “traditionally” male but does not let this limit him to a overtly macho/machismo way of being, and Rakel finds in him a true male ally in the unfair, sexist adult world. The Fable is the threat to the closed system of the male hegemony and the empty enticements of totalitarianism.

Bojunga’s male protagonists generally embody the trappings of toxic masculinity. However Bojunga's narratives go beyond this notion by showing the creativity of the human as opening a possible alternative gender performance for people who identify as male, yet seek a fuller text of its meaning. Through Lucas’s rejection of his father, to Claudio persisting in his quest to wonder, to Rakel and Alfonso’s friendship, the novels take us on a journey of courage and subversion.

Masculinity and gender performance is a fluid, wondrous thing, and by empowering these male characters Bojunga illustrates not only the strength of the vulnerable child who faces the open field of the self, but also the tools and keys in a creative fantasy where young males can find a way to avert and subvert the gendered expectations put upon them. Bojunga gives ground to those who seek through being lost, uncertain, and confused, to those who ask “why”, to those who saying no to being the singularly formed. Bojunga creates so one can embark on freedom of gender and how to express it. In the openness these males find that anything is possible and the restrictions of patriarchy need not apply. Play, creativity and true heroism are given narrative ground in Bojunga's text, giving the greatest message there is: everyone embodies difference.

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