

## ANTIFEMINISM AND WHITE IDENTITY POLITICS: *Political antagonisms in radical right-wing populist and anti-immigration rhetoric in Finland*

### Abstract

This article analyses how gendered, racialised and classed antagonisms are created in texts by radical right-wing populists and intellectuals connected to the anti-immigration movement and the antifeminist men's rights movement in Finland. The studied rhetoric focuses on the reproduction of the "white nation" as part of the endangered "Western civilisation"; a feminism "gone too far" and shifts in heterosexual power relations in the postcolonial era. The rhetoric is discussed as political reimaginings that aim to recentre white masculinity in a society that has seen its self-evident and normative position questioned.

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## 1 Introduction

The terrorist attack on the 22nd of July 2011 in Norway not only brought to public attention the Islamophobic ideologies of right-wing extremists but also raised questions about their links to views routinely circulating in European political and media debates on immigration and multiculturalism. While Anders Behring Breivik's violent acts certainly were extreme and as such broadly condemned in the Nordic societies, the anti-Islamic rhetoric and the construction of political antagonisms in his compendium *2083: A European Declaration of Independence* is far from being unique. In the text, available on the Internet, Breivik claims that the "multicultural elite", "cultural Marxists" and feminists are responsible for the annihilation of the Norwegian society through the encouragement of Muslim immigration and the dominating "political correctness". This bears resemblance to how many Nordic radical right-wing populists and activists in the anti-immigration movement present their opponents as the left-wing "elite" that speaks for multiculturalism, often represented by women in powerful positions (Keskinen 2011).

The intersections of gender, sexuality and "race" are central for Breivik's rhetoric. The compendium presents the future of the Christian Europe as endangered by the rapidly rising immigration from Muslim countries and the alleged overwhelming reproductive capacity of these groups. Stephen Walton (2012) argues that Breivik portrays feminism and the weakening of the position of heterosexual men as the essence of the "cultural Marxist" project. According to Walton, the compendium claims that "women, having exploited feminism to achieve the privileged status of victimhood, set about

penalising European men and bestowing privileges on other chosen groups of victims through policies of affirmative action" (Walton 2012: 5). Moreover, this process is characterised by a devastation of religion and sexual morality that have given way to the expanding consumer capitalism. Since Breivik regards the majority of cultural Marxists and multiculturalists to be women/feminists, and thus accountable for the fall of the Western society, he programmatically advocates killing women and "re-implementing patriarchy" (Walton 2012: 6–7). As Mulinari and Neergaard (2012) point out, instead of the common perception that Breivik's attack was an act of terror against the nation, it is better characterised as an act aimed to save the nation.

While some would dismiss such thoughts as odd curiosities or utmost expressions of a pathological individual, my aim is here to situate them in the Nordic context and show how similar articulations of multiculturalism, feminism and race<sup>1</sup> take place in more mainstream discourses. This article analyses how gendered, racialised and classed antagonisms are created in texts by radical right-wing populists and intellectuals connected to the anti-immigration movement using data from Finland. My aim is not to suggest that the analysed texts have directly influenced Breivik or should be equated with his compendium. Instead, I examine the societal trends and the discourses that provide cultural resources for extreme right activists like Breivik to draw upon. I argue that these constructions of political antagonisms are the result of an intertwining of two kinds of anxieties related to societal changes in current Nordic countries – anxieties

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over the future of the “white nation” fantasy and the changing gender and sexual relations. This has led to a rise of *white border guard masculinities* that, while articulating a longing to the “golden days” predating the 1960s liberationist movements, nevertheless focus on creating visions for the future.

The analysis focuses on texts produced by central intellectuals, debaters and politicians who have shaped the political rhetoric of the Finnish anti-immigration and anti-feminist men’s movements. The rise of such rhetoric is part of a more general upsurge of radical right-wing populist, anti-multicultural and culturalist agendas in current European politics. “Worrying” about the nation, claiming multiculturalism as a “failed” experience and emphasising the need to integrate “illiberal” minorities are characteristics of European politics of the last decade, involving not only radical right-wing populists but also large sections of mainstream parties (e.g. Lentin & Titley 2011; Vertovec & Wessendorf 2010). I explore the construction of political antagonisms, which I define as relations understood to form the central dividing line in the society, and elements considered as non-compatible with each other. Like the “popular antagonisms” that Laclau and Mouffe (2001: 131; cf. Yilmaz 2012) discuss, the antagonisms I study here are based on a simplification of social space and divide this space into two opposing camps.

## 2 Nordic nations, whiteness and gender

Although an often implicit and taken-for-granted notion, the idea of whiteness is essential for national identities in the Nordic countries. Whiteness here not only refers to a set of bodily distinctions, but to a system of privileges and a “form of power [that] is defined, deployed, performed, policed and reinvented” (Twine & Gallagher 2008: 5) through a range of practices. Those marked out by their non-white bodies are referred to as “immigrants” or “foreigners” and subjected to racialising processes, despite the fact that they may have been born and raised in the country (Lundström 2007; Rastas 2005). Moreover, the national imaginaries of the Nordic countries are based on the idea of being part of the “white West”,<sup>2</sup> the place where modernity perceivedly developed and resulted in superior economic, scientific and cultural achievements (Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012).

Historically, notions of whiteness have developed in connection with colonial and race biology discourses. Contrary to the common image of the Nordic countries as outsiders to the colonial project with minor connections to the history of racism, the countries in fact participated in colonial endeavours in multiple ways, (re)produced colonial imaginaries and elaborated knowledge that placed “whites” on top of the racial hierarchy (e.g. Hübinette & Lundström 2011: 44; Keskinen *et al.* 2009). As in many other European countries, whiteness became connected to the idea of Westernness, which through its link to modernity articulated meanings of progress, civilisation and rationality (Bonnett 2000, 2004; Mattson 2005: 143). However, for the Finns to become categorised as “white Westerners” was no self-evidency, but involved a long process of convincing other Europeans that the classification of Finns as (descendants of) “Mongols” in the early racial taxonomies was false (Rastas 2004: 98–99; Leinonen 2012: 215). Instead of questioning the racial hierarchies, Finnish researchers sought to claim a position among “white” Europeans and, thereby, adjusted to and reproduced the racialised power relations. Encounters with non-western “others” were especially important for the “whitening” of Finnishness, since it was through the distinction to these groups that Finns could be firmly placed among the “white” Europeans and the ambiguities erased (Urponen 2010).

As the previous examples show, neither whiteness nor the national identity that it is articulated to is fixed or clear-cut entity. They are constantly (re)constructed in processes in which class, culture, religion and other markers of difference are used to define the boundaries of the category. Several feminist researchers have shown that the notion of gender equality is essential for current Nordic discourses on nationhood and, moreover, provides ground for the creation of self-images as modern, progressive and advanced nations through a juxtaposition to migrant “others” projected to the past and stagnation (e.g. de los Reyes, Molina & Mulinari 2003; Keskinen *et al.* 2009). Such discourses promote visions of equal, emancipated and tolerant Nordic citizens through a contrast to “bad patriarchies” located in distant places and migrant bodies. National imaginaries and discourses are particularly significant given the state’s “ability to legislate on the symbolic and material limits of national belonging, to distribute social and economic resources, [and] to structure institutional practices that problematise and police racialised groups” (Pitcher 2009: 30).

As Ghassan Hage (2000: 39–46) notes, the discourse of “home” bears a central relevance to nationalist practices and both definitions of what “homeliness” is and who can participate in the definitional processes express specific relations to the nation. Only certain groups can claim governmental belonging and harbour beliefs of participating in the management of the nation, involving the treatment of “others” as the objects to be managed. Drawing on Lacan and Žizek, Hage (2000: 69–73) emphasises that the “white” national order is a fantasy: it is about yearnings that nationalists aim to bring about and to simultaneously construct themselves as “meaningful” subjects driven by the task of building a homely nation. What is at stake for these nationalist activists is not only the national order, but a personal struggle for a meaningful life and subjectivity. These two are elementary linked, which indicates the affective dimension of nationalism. The “other” is constructed as that which stands in the way of the achievement of the imagined (white) national home.

In this article, I will expand on Hage’s idea of “homeliness” to include both the “white nation” fantasy *and* a specific sexual order. The anxieties and loss of privileges discussed above are not only related to racial but also gender and sexual relations. Reviewing Anglo-American studies about white men who express feelings of being under attack by claims from the feminist and anti-racist movement, Ferber (2000: 31) states: “central to this backlash is a sense of confusion over the meanings of both masculinity and whiteness, triggered by the perceived loss of white, male privileges”. The expansion of stories of white men’s victimisation, woundedness and disempowerment have been interpreted by feminist and critical men’s studies scholars as responses to the social and economic changes posing challenges to male power (Bode 2006). Such societal and cultural changes are of no less significance in the Nordic context, characterised by state feminism and official gender equality politics.

However, I find the “backlash” argument simplified and suggest that we instead regard the processes and political rhetoric studied in this article as struggles to reimagine “whiteness” and “masculinity” in order to politically mobilise in a changing societal setting. Following Robinson (2006: 4), I find it important to analyse shifting forms of normativity and the powers that lie in such definitions. While the power of whiteness and masculinity should not be underestimated, its enactments, contestations and effects take multiple forms in the “post-liberationist” era that has seen the rise of feminist, anti-racist, anti-colonialist and queer discourses. White masculinities are not only presented as the unquestioned norm, but to a growing extent also becoming part of an identity politics elaborated by and for

white men. Thus, as also Tebble (2006) and Pitcher (2009) writing about the “crisis” of multiculturalism discourse have noted, identity politics is not only a tool for feminists, gays or black people, but also dominant groups mobilise around politicised identities and draw upon emancipatory discourses.

I introduce the concept *white border guard masculinities* to grasp how ideas of homeliness, whiteness and sexual relations are connected to each other in the kind of rhetoric studied. What characterises such masculinities is a fixation on borders, border-control, cultural boundary work and exclusions that are treated as necessities in the changing setting. The racial and sexual “homeliness” of the nation is seen to be under threat, which serves as a basis for reimagining national and sexual politics in order to gain hegemony, instead of merely vocalising passive nostalgia.

### 3 Researching texts in the Finnish political context

Since autumn 2008, immigration and multiculturalism have been frequently debated issues in Finnish media and politics. While a widely accepted consensus about a strict immigration policy has been characteristic of Finnish politics for several decades, especially in relation to asylum seeking, and the media coverage of refugees has largely focussed on problems, it was only after the municipal elections in October 2008 that a group of politicians organised around anti-immigration issues became the focus of broad interest in media and politics (Keskinen, Rastas & Tuori 2009). In the elections, the populist True Finns<sup>3</sup> party gained a clear growth of support and several of the elected candidates gathered their votes by blogging or participating in discussions on anti-immigration websites. In the following years, immigration and multiculturalism triggered heated debates in the media and politics. Anti-immigration arguments and calls for stricter immigration policies received support not only from politicians in the True Finns but a range of parties too, notably the National Coalition party, the Finnish Centre party and the Finnish Social Democratic party (Keskinen 2009). In the Parliamentary elections in April 2011, the True Finns gained the position as the third biggest party with 19% of votes but was left outside the government. Several of the new Parliamentary members had an anti-immigration profile. Among the most influential was Jussi Halla-aho, later convicted of racist speech and blasphemy (Keskinen 2012). The openly racist utterances and convictions for racist speech by True Finns Parliamentary members have featured frequently in newspaper headlines since the elections.

The data analysed in this article include texts by intellectuals and politicians who have voiced the concerns of the anti-immigration movement and the antifeminist men’s movement in public. While these two social movements should be regarded as distinct, they nevertheless intersect at nodal points of which the analysed texts are pertinent examples. The authors and the texts were chosen based on their influence (interpreted as media coverage, broad sales, citations or other popularity within the movement, political effects, etc.) and their focus on both immigration and gender issues.

The studied texts articulating the concerns from the anti-immigration movement include the book *Länsimaiden tuho* [The destruction of Western societies], by Timo Vihavainen, and the blog texts of Jussi Halla-aho, Parliamentary member of the True Finns and the ideological leader of the anti-immigration activists. *Länsimaiden tuho* was published in the beginning of 2009 and received broad publicity in the media where it was presented as a courageous act of breaking taboos and speaking the “unspeakable”, i.e. presenting

harsh critique towards non-western migrants and Islam. Jussi Halla-aho, again, has blogged on the website *Scripta. Kirjoituksia uppoavasta Lännestä* [Writings from the sinking West] about Islam, the “unintegratable” migrant communities and the dystopic future of the “West” since 2003. His reputation and political career originated in these blog texts, a selection of which has also been published as a book.

The texts articulating the antifeminist men’s rights agenda include the books *Ihmisen viheliäisyydestä ja muita esseitä* [The wretchedness of man and other essays] and *Ilman* [Without], by Timo Hännikäinen (2008), as well as the book *Naisten seksuaalinen valta* [Women’s sexual power] and the blog texts by Henry Laasanen. The books published in 2008–2011 have all been the focus of wide media attention that praised them for the novelty of approach and the breaking of taboos of discussing sexuality from a male perspective and criticising feminism. In *Ilman*, Hännikäinen writes an essay about living in forced celibacy for the major part of his 30-year-old life, as well as analyses its societal causes, effects and the implications of feminism. In *Ihmisen viheliäisyydestä ja muita esseitä*, he broadly debates issues of multiculturalism and the role of feminists in promoting it. Henry Laasanen’s *Naisten seksuaalinen valta* presents a theory on heterosexual pairing and the erotic power women wield. The authors make intertextual references to each other’s texts, for example, Hännikäinen not only cites Vihavainen and Laasanen but has also written an essay to support Jussi Halla-aho in the book *Mitä Jussi Halla-aho tarkoittaa?* [What does Jussi Halla-aho mean?].

In the analysis of the texts, I have used discourse analytical tools (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002; Wetherell, Taylor & Yates 2001) to detect central discursive structures and main themes in the texts. Furthermore, the rhetorical aspects such as how the arguments were built have been explored. My aim has not been to name specific discourses; instead, the analysis has focussed on how gender, race and ethnicity are co-constructed in the texts and how hierarchies are created on basis of these categorisations. I have focussed on themes that connect the studied texts; thus, the differences between the authors will only be briefly discussed here.

### 4 Reproduction of the “white” nation

A central concern for the authors lies in the reproduction of the “white” Finnish nation and the “Western civilisation”. While the distinctions from the non-western “others” serve to position Finnishness firmly within “white Westernness”, the latter is also regarded as contaminated by the growing influence of post-1960s liberationist movements.

Especially the texts by Vihavainen, Halla-aho and Hännikäinen are characterised by a persistent worry about the “white” nation and the future of the West, the two of which are regarded as fundamentally entwined. The rhetoric contrasts “Western civilisation” with “barbarians” that threaten to destroy the high cultural level and the superior values that (white) Europe harbours. In the studied texts, the term “barbarians” at times refers to the “enemy” from the “inside”, notably adolescent hooligans and others embodying irrational violence and the extinction of traditional honourable masculinity. However, for the major part the “barbarians” are equalled with migrants from Africa and the Middle East, especially Muslims. As for many right-wing populists and anti-Islamic intellectuals in Europe (Gingrich & Banks 2006; Mudde 2007: 84–85), the major threat is perceived as the Islamisation of the West that is portrayed as the end of Western civilisation and its fundamental values.

Since all cultures are equal, we assume that we don't have the right to assimilate immigrants by force-feeding them our values (for example, our views of gender equality or personal integrity). Slowly but inevitably those whom I call (without arrogance and scruples) barbarians will change from a small and exotic group to, at first, a notable minority and, later on, to the majority. At that point we are no more the ones to define 'good society'. At that point it will be done by those who have abused our values without believing a moment in them. Thereafter follows darkness. (Halla-aho 2005a)

The threat towards the "white" Finnish nation and the Western way of living is described in terms familiar from the discourse on "failed" multiculturalism circulating in Europe (Lentin & Titley 2011; Vertovec & Wessendorf 2010; Phillips & Saharso 2008): the marginalised and rioting young men from the non-white "ghetto" areas, the burden of the unemployed migrants for the welfare state and the patriarchal culture of non-Western migrants. The other European countries, notably the multi-ethnic Sweden, are represented as the examples *par excellence* of the grim future characterised by suburban riots and rapes of "white" women that awaits Finland, if nothing is done to block the "mass" migration. What distinguishes Finland from these countries, according to the authors, is however that the number of non-Western migrants is lower and thus there is still (a short) time to change the development.

Gender equality is presented as a profound marker of difference, as in rhetoric by other Nordic radical right-wing populists and anti-immigration activists (Meret & Siim 2013; Norocel 2010). Frequent references to honour-killings, female genital cuttings and rapes by non-white migrants are listed to argue for the destructive effects of the demographic changes, and Finland/West is described as gender equal against the patriarchal "others" (also Keskinen 2011, 2012). However, the argument is extended even further, as will be discussed more thoroughly in the following sections: Finland is characterised by a *gender equality gone too far*, having turned into a domination of feminists in the public sphere and the subordination of white heterosexual men.

In the texts, the causes of the demographic changes are located in migration from non-Western and Muslim countries and the reproductive patterns of Muslim families. Moreover, this tendency is seen to exacerbate through the reproductive feebleness of the "white" population, expressed as "broken families", homosexuality and women's career orientation. These trends are, in varying ways by the authors, dated to the cultural revolution and the change of sexual behaviour following the 1960s. The "post-liberationist" era (Robinson 2006) is viewed as a period in which sexual freedom has become the common mantra, partnerships are reduced to short-term flings and the heterosexual nuclear family is used as an insulting term. What is most alarming, according to the authors, is the effect of these trends on the "white" population that will be outnumbered by the uncivilised "others".

Hence, the fear of the Islamisation of the "white West" is grouped together with concerns about the deterioration of the cultural level as the result of the displacement of Christianity and the heterosexual family, as well as the decline of "good habits". The societal position of Christianity is not only threatened by Islam but also by the invasive secularisation. This dystopic view also presents consumerism and the surge of individualism as replacing family ties and other social relations. The arguments mix together conservative ideals of the heterosexual family and a more radical critique of the effects of neoliberal capitalism on social relations.

When arguing for the "failure" of multiculturalism and the decline of the Western civilisation, the authors draw on news from other European countries, as well as several conservative academics. Thus, they participate in the construction of what Lentin and Titley (2011: 21) call "recited truths": "recitation involves the production of social facts through narrativisation and repetition, facts which then appear unconstructed by anyone". Transnational influences are thus used to legitimise and naturalise racialising rhetoric.

Among the most cited volumes are those by Oswald Spengler, Samuel Huntington and Theodore Dalrymple. Adopted from these authors, are ideas about the evolution of civilisations, the clashes of different civilisations and their incompatibility. Cultures are treated as clearly distinguishable entities and placed in hierarchical order in relation to their perceived evolutionary stage, thus reproducing colonial fantasies of white superiority.

[t]he Western culture is very self-indulgent and doesn't take into account that its civilizational stage, using Spengler's concepts, is not a natural environment for those who arrive from an environment of a different civilizational stage. These newcomers, with which I mean mainly Muslim migrants, experience a natural need to gather in ghettos and live in their own enclaves, outside the rest of the society and according to their own strict rules. The combining of these two environments may prove to be an impossible equation. [...] Neither do the armies at least yet march back and forth here in the West, but instead in the most primitive countries from which the inhabitants try to move here. (Vihavainen 2009: 47–48)

The centrality of whiteness becomes explicit when the authors discuss "desired" and "undesired" migrants. Arguing that Russians are to be favoured as immigrants compared with other groups, Vihavainen, a professor of Russian studies, refers to the shared Christian religion, familiarity of Russian culture to Finns and Russia as "a country of white people" (Vihavainen 2009: 59). He emphasises the role of the East/West border, but locates it within Russia. Halla-aho, a former researcher in Slavic languages, describes the (white, Christian) Armenian community in Ukraine as an example of a successful multiculturalism although, he complains, this kind of phenomenon is not in the public sphere defined as multiculturalism since such a definition requires the presence of black people: "the negro is a nicer 'ethno' than for example, an Armenian, since you can't see from the Armenian that he is an 'ethno'" (Halla-aho 2005b). Hännikäinen, respectively, claims that "most people want to live in an environment where the majority has the same mother tongue, melanin concentration in skin, history and cultural habits" (2011: 74).

## 5 Powerful women in politics and media

Vihavainen, Halla-aho and Hännikäinen position themselves as part of the political right and attack the "Marxist clique" and sympathisers of Green and Left parties for establishing and reproducing multicultural ideologies. Their main object of critique is "political correctness" in its various forms: affirmative action policies, restrictions to racist and sexist language, criminalisation of clients of prostitution and actions to prevent sexual harassment. Such acts are regarded as totalitarianism, referring to the Soviet system of detailed regulation and control of citizens but also to the "post-liberationist" North-America that is the birth place of many of the mentioned initiatives.

Thus, political correctness is the term that connects opposition against anti-racist, feminist and queer politics. Emblematic of such politics are, according to the studied authors, a group of female politicians, administrators, journalists and intellectuals – the “ecolefist” women or the “awareness raisers”.

The worldview of the awareness raisers is totalitarian, but not in the masculine aggressive, blustering and subordinating way of, for example, fascism or militant Islamism. Their totalitarianism is more subtle, feminine. The awareness raiser is by soul not a police or a warrant officer, but a primary school or kindergarten teacher. She divides people into the guilty ones, the victims and the passive ones and treats them as a professional nanny her flock of children. Those that she regards as victims she patronizes, pampers and bribes, while the unruly guilty ones need to be scolded and threatened – not however spanked since that would not follow the advice of the progressive educational books. (Hännikäinen 2011: 26–27)

The “awareness raisers” embody a puritan way of life in which everything from meat to fast food, jokes about minorities, pornography and sexual pleasure are forbidden. This is a society of “the castrating women”, as Vihavainen (2009: 58) writes citing an American colleague. Sweden is presented as the dystopic example number one not only due to its multi-ethnic population but also the dominant feminist politics and the “suffocating” welfare state. The welfare state is presented as the feminine sphere in which white heterosexual men are emasculated and required to follow rules set by feminists.

[Sweden.] that country of pastel coloured letterboxes and gender neutral kindergartens, in which one probably ends up in forced therapy if one speaks in a nasty manner to someone, is a state in which the equality of citizens is monitored in a manner of paranoid accuracy. In Sweden the newspapers categorically refuse to mention characteristics like skin colour in crime news in order to prevent ethnic discrimination and for the same reason a certain school forbid students to wear a T-shirt, with the national team and the Swedish flag, in a school photograph. The strong and visible feminist movement has, among others, demanded the removal of urinals from men’s toilets, so that everyone would have to piss in a gender equal way in a sitting position. (Hännikäinen 2011: 62)

The most fierce attacks are directed towards women holding powerful positions in politics and the immigration administration. The former Immigration Minister (and the only holder of the post so far in Finland) Astrid Thors, who represents the Swedish People’s party, was the target of aggressive verbal attacks by Jussi Halla-aho and other activists in the anti-immigration movement on the Internet. Thors together with leading female administrators who managed immigration issues in the ministries were held responsible for the “neglectful” immigration politics.

Finland is, due to conscious decisions, inheriting the role of the sewer from Sweden in the *völkerwanderung* affairs. The central forces behind the decisions that have led to the new situation are currently Astrid Thors and Ritva Viljanen [the head of immigration affairs in the Ministry of Interior]. People should awake to the change of the situation, so that we don’t follow the way that Sweden did since the middle of 1970s. [...] To the defence of the

Swedish decision makers we have to admit that at the time they didn’t know what uncontrollable immigration and multiculturalism would lead to. Our mister (and mrs.) leaders do know but they don’t care. (Halla-aho 2008)

The aggressive tone in the anti-immigration rhetoric turns into misogyny at certain points. For example, Halla-aho was reported to the police in 2008 for a blog text in which he expressed a wish that women being raped by the brutal “other” men would be supporters of multiculturalism from the Green and Left parties (Keskinen 2012). In the text, he portrays the threat to the white nation caused by the racialised “others” but even more so by white women who stand as “protective shields” preventing patriotic men from removing the threatening “others”. The emasculation of white men is double, since they are not only prevented from saving the nation but also forced to subordinate to the powerful women who control central positions in the government and administration. The cause of such “frustrated masculinities” is located in Finnish women who ally themselves with the “other” men – a betrayal that is hard to accept (Keskinen 2011). Thus, these women are viewed as “traitors” of, and within, the white nation, letting down their countrymen who would expect their support and admiration.

The “lady in a flowery hat” (*kukkahattutäti*) is a common nickname often used in an aggressive way in immigration debates on the websites to refer to the defenders of multiculturalism, notably educated women in powerful positions (Keskinen 2011). The figure is defined by gender, race and class: the term creates an image of a white upper-class lady who interferes and moralises over the “common man”, while at the same time being estranged from the realities of everyday life. It is thus a construction of the “elite” as opposed to the “people”, a division crucial for right-wing populists (e.g. Gingrich & Banks 2006; Mudde 2007), but in specifically gendered and racialised terms that establishes the antagonistic relation between these two poles even more forcefully than in cases where the gender difference is not articulated.

As an effect of the multiple articulations, the affective dimension of the “white nation” fantasy is tangible in the anti-immigration debates, especially on the Internet. For example, in 2010 a police report was made about a hate group on Facebook titled “I’m willing to sit in prison a couple of years for killing Astrid Thors”, established by a True Finns deputy municipal council member who was later sentenced for threatening behaviour.

Similarly, in Sweden the former leader of the Social Democrats, Mona Sahlin, has been the target of abusive campaigns on the Internet and election material of the Sweden Democrats, in which the figure of “Mona Muslim”, featuring Sahlin in a head scarf and a submissive smile on her face when visiting a mosque, has been circulated (Hübinette & Lundström 2011: 49). Sweden is perhaps the Nordic country in which feminist politics has had the most profound effects on state policies, against which the attacks of also the Finnish anti-immigration activists should be viewed.

## 6 Market value and race in heterosexual pairing

White women’s power and the troublesome effects of feminism are also discussed in relation to heterosexual relations in the studied texts. While heterosexuality in these notions becomes an arena for intense power struggles between “white” women and men, the postcolonial context and the racialised encounters that increasingly take place *within* national borders can also be treated as means to

shifts in these power relations. Thus, certain kinds of non-western migration (of “foreign” wives, prostitutes) may even be favoured.

Especially Hännikäinen and Laasanen argue for the erotic power of (white) women over (white) men,<sup>4</sup> building on evolutionary and social exchange theories, as well as personal experiences. According to Laasanen (2008: 95), people can be given a market value of attraction based on their potential demand on the heterosexual pairing market. Due to women’s selectivity in relation to sexual partners men are divided into three categories: the “upper level”, “middle range” and “lower level” men, based on their attributes and capacity to attract women (Laasanen 2008: 113). This utilitarian reasoning characterises individuals as maximisers of self-interests and introduces the language of economics into intimate and (hetero) sexual relations. The rhetoric builds a clear cut division between men and women, and portrays the interests of these two groups as distinct and contradictory. The gender dichotomy is treated as the self-evident and natural ground on top of which the social exchange takes place.

The studied authors also feature as spokespersons for the “lower level” ranked (white) men, evident especially in Hännikäinen’s texts. The lack of sexual partners and satisfaction becomes an explanation for various social and psychological phenomena, such as depression, insomnia and aggression. In the daily newspaper *Aamulehti*, a columnist, arguing in the manner of Laasanen, Hännikäinen and their companions, claimed that Anders Behring Breivik’s terrorist attack was caused by a lack of sex life.<sup>5</sup> In the aftermath of a shooting in the city centre of Hyvinkää, where an 18-year-old man killed two and injured seven while shooting from the top of a shopping mall, Laasanen argues in a similar manner:

All mass killers are united by a marginalised position in the pairing market and lack an active sex life. If the killers had enjoyed an active sex life, the murders would most likely not have been committed, because having a sex life is more fun than killing people. And I’m not saying this in order to blame women or to demand women to consent to sex, but because it’s true. (Laasanen 2012a)

Feminists are claimed to have established a specific version of political correctness, “sexual correctness”, that defines the forms and limits of “good sex” and by doing so stigmatises some sexual fantasies as sexist and colonialist. Feminist responses to prostitution and non-white sexual partners are criticised by Hännikäinen (2011: 145–158) who praises a Cuban sex worker he used to visit regularly for not only being beautiful but also for respecting white Finnish men, cooking and doing the dishes – an image that he presents in dark contrast with white Finnish women. Hännikäinen also argues for the right to fantasize about colonial sexual relations in the name of hedonism, thus promoting a legitimisation of the privileges of the “white Westerner”.

Am I a bad person, if I want to have sex with Asian, negro and mulatto women like colonial masters in the old times? I have not myself chosen the objects of my desire. Although my fantasies were just the offspring of culture, childhood experiences or the pornificated media, I have internalized them and they bring me pleasure. If I have grown awry, why shouldn’t I be allowed to enjoy my fairly harmless awryness to the full of it?” (Hännikäinen 2011: 158)

The studied texts create a juxtaposition between white emancipated feminists and “foreign” prostitutes and wives – both in

their characteristics and differences of interest. White feminists are portrayed as hostile towards women from non-western countries, since migration could lead to a change in the privileged position of white women and to the erosion of the gender equality discourse. The argumentation draws on market value theory to establish credibility and capitalise on the power of scientific knowledge.

Resistance towards foreign wives is understandable from the perspective of safeguarding the sexual value of Finnish women. If indeed a lot of foreign women who were ‘service oriented in sexual and housekeeping ways’ would enter Finland, the Finnish women who wish to marry would need to enter the competition by providing men with similar benefits. (Laasanen 2008: 176)

The juxtaposition is based on perceptions of the interest and capacity of these two groups of women to satisfy the (sexual, emotional and care related) needs of white heterosexual men. This is the core around which the texts circulate, the nodal point of the different arguments and images.

Also non-white and white heterosexual men are positioned against each other in a reasoning that emphasises how the “price” of sex becomes higher for white Finnish men when “foreign” men find partners in white Finnish women. According to this logic, the mathematical ratio turns even worse, since the “polygamous African men” have access to more than one woman and, moreover, do not allow non-white women to pair with white Finnish men (Laasanen 2010).

The identity politics of white heterosexual men and the role of the “crisis” discourse in it becomes explicit in a text by Laasanen (2012b) in which he claims that the victim position provides important “victim capital” in the current Nordic welfare states. To gain political and material resources from the state, a group needs to identify as an innocent and worthy victim – a position, however, open only for women, homosexuals, migrants and practically all other groups in the society except white heterosexual men. The victim position, according to Laasanen, is a form of power denied from white heterosexual men. I interpret this identity political strategy as an effort to reimagine the forms and means to gain power to white heterosexual men in a Nordic context that has seen the rise of institutionalised gender equality politics and in which the welfare state functions as a central bastion of political, discursive and material power. As Winant (2004) and Robinson (2006) in respective ways argue, racial hierarchies are expressed in new forms in the “post-liberationist” era, the transformations of which need to be the focus of critical research. In the Nordic context, the imagining of the welfare state as the locus of left-wing and feminist politics and the remasculinisation that is achieved by struggles against the imaginary (gendered and racialised) “elites” occupy a central role in such transformations.

## 7 Conclusions

In this article, I have explored the main discursive structures and themes in the rhetoric of central intellectuals in the anti-immigration and antifeminist men’s movement in Finland. The rhetoric is shown to overlap on several points and to construct specific political antagonisms. The major antagonistic relations are presented as those between: (1) the “civilized West” and the “barbarians” (Muslims and non-western migrants), (2) the naïve “multicultural elite” and the brave, realistic but marginalised intellectuals, (3) feminists and the common Finnish man, (4) women and men. Gender, race, ethnicity

and class intersect in a crucial way in the construction of antagonisms, producing a juxtaposition of concerned white men who struggle to save the “white nation”, and the “civilized West” that the image is closely linked to, as opposed to naïve white women whose misuse of power has led to both feminism “gone too far” and the decline of the “white nation”. While the racialised “others” are essential for this kind of politics, the rhetoric nevertheless centres on the “white nation” and its perceived actors, showing how such rhetoric is essentially about exercising the governmental will available only for those who can self-evidently claim national belonging.

I regard the rhetoric and the produced antagonisms as enactments of what I call “white border guard masculinities” in the current Finnish society. While the rise of such masculinities is not restricted to Finland, as the references to other countries show, they take specific forms in each historical and societal context. In the Finnish context, the emphasis has been on the reproduction of the “white nation”, as part of “Western civilisation”; a feminism gone too far; and power shifts in heterosexual relations. Such masculinities are fixed on boundary-drawing and border-control both in relation to race, gender and sexuality, but do this in varying and selective ways, which renders some migrant groups (“foreign” wives, prostitutes, white Christian groups) as desirable.

While some researchers, for example, Hübinette and Lundström (2011) in their analysis of Sweden in the aftermath of the victory of Sweden Democrats in the 2010 Parliamentary elections, interpret right-wing populist politics as a reinstallation of white masculinity, my argument is that we are not dealing with a reinstallation of something that previously existed but with reimaginings and new forms of political arguments and antagonisms. Instead of mere nostalgia to times “gone by”, the rhetoric is oriented towards visioning the future. Nevertheless, these reimaginings include the aim to recentre white masculinity in a society that has seen its self-evident and normative position questioned.

At times this takes the shape of moves that “recentre through decentring” (Robinson 2006: 12). Especially the focus on heterosexual relations, men’s victimisation and personal narratives of living in forced celibacy could be interpreted as being at odds with traditional notions of masculinity; however, a more thorough analysis shows that while they are new articulations of whiteness, masculinity and heterosexuality, they are nevertheless efforts to recentre white masculinity and the privileges of the position. The necessity to reimagine and rearticulate is a result of the various struggles of the “post-liberationist” era, leading even some white heterosexual men to mobilise around identity politics. The Nordic context characterised by institutionalised equality politics, welfare state policies and increase of women in politics and administration makes this even clearer than in many other European countries (cf. Keskinen 2011, 2012).

In a society where the self-evidency of white normativity and normative heterosexuality have been questioned, the rise of white border guard masculinities is one response to these societal and

cultural changes. The analysed rhetoric bears clear resemblance to the one in Breivik’s compendium, as examined by Walton (2012). While my analysis has not detected equivalences in relation to use of violence between Breivik’s and the studied author’s texts, it should however be noted that the “white nation” fantasy can be central in establishing group identities and subjectivities. Thus, the feelings of being wounded or threatened may in certain situations result in fierce attacks towards those seen as responsible for the current development, as evidenced in the case of Breivik and other extreme right activists.

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## Notes

1. I understand race as a socially and culturally constructed category that nonetheless has real effects on people’s lives and societal processes. Racialisation refers to processes of differentiating people, stabilising these differences and legitimating power differences based on them (Molina 2005). Racialisation can occur on basis of perceived biological differences, skin colour or cultural differences, often combining elements of these.
2. When referring to a geographical meaning the spelling I use is west or western, while West and Western are employed when referring to the idea or political usage of the term.
3. I use the translation True Finns for the party Perussuomalaiset. This was previously used as an official translation, for example, at the homepage of the Finnish Parliament. Recently the party decided to change its English name to Finns, but since this is not a proper translation of the original name and it associates the party with all Finns I have chosen to use the previous translation.
4. That the discussion focuses on whiteness is evident from the following discussion on “foreign” women and men, despite the universalising language in the original text.
5. Markus Määttä: Puheenaihe: Tytön puute sairastuttaa miehenalun. Aamulehti 26.7.2011 <http://www.aamulehti.fi/Kotimaa/1194688377213/artikkeli/puheenaihe%20tyton%20puute%20sairastuttaa%20miehenalun.html>[accessed 8.9.2012].

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