

KRISTINA

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TRANSLATION THOM BRIDGE & ANJA OLOFGÖRS

PART ONE

So there I sat, with the crown in my hands: I had decided
I was going to give it back
Raised to be a man and a ruler
And so...
–in the nation’s interest–
the need to be a woman, a child bearer and a wife
Both, or neither
Chosen but foreign
Obeyed and respected
But was I loved?
Queen – no thanks
Instead I thought of becoming human.

My story is a blend of
realism, surrealism and nightmare.

I am a female myth:
a mythologized icon
One among many.

I was born with the caul - face, arms and legs free. I was covered in hair and had a rough, strong voice. All of this meant that the midwives thought I was a boy. They filled the whole castle with their false cries of joy that for a second confused the King himself. Hope and longing worked together to mislead them all. And a deep embarrassment spread when they saw that they had been mistaken.

My father loved me, in spite of it all. The King ordered all of my teachers to provide me the best education that Sweden could possibly offer. I would be given a completely male upbringing, I would learn everything that a young prince needed to know in order to be fit to reign. He was explicit in what he didn't want: I should not be imprinted with something of my gender's mindset.

Everyone hoped I would be just as good as a boy.

* * *

I learned mathematics
I am well versed in politics and military strategies
Know how to ride and hunt
Speak a dozen languages
I learned everything about science and sport
Likewise, weapon's use
I was hard working
I read everything with pleasure.

I was raised to be man
I was raised as a king
I was raised to be a king.

My education wasn't without its problems
We—women—were considered to be second-class people
Inferior
First we were given the theological argument:
—God says it should be this way.
Then it was the medical reason:
—Women's bodies are so weak.
They said that we were an imperfect man of some kind
An individual that stopped halfway to being a perfect man
That we were some kind of natural malformation
Albeit, an attractive one.

I dressed in male clothing, and I was told I was mannish
I was courted by both sexes
I was dark, a plain woman with a crippled shoulder
Had a neck that was short and thick
I was short, had a broad forehead,
shining eyes and and a hooked nose
I did not have much of a female beauty
---- or a classic beauty.
I had more of a beautiful ugliness

I was beautifulugly,
I was Beautiful/Ugly.

My temper was nothing but fire and flame
Heated and dry ----
Not like women's: cold and damp
Cold and damp – to breed healthy and strong children.

No, the makeup of my body was similar to that of men
Inside of me the seeds of men did not develop
Here it was arid and overheated
I was a male individual in a woman's body
A (Fe?) Male
A Male (Fe?)

I was
fearless
strong-willed
vigorous
I defended myself from being associated with femininity!
I thanked God that he made my soul completely male.

I was always told I was mannish
I was constantly reminded by those surrounding me that I was
a woman.
This I knew, all too well.

I've always seen my gender as a fault,
my biggest fault.

I've learnt that my gender's weakness: is the greatest of weaknesses.

* * *

So there I sat, with the crown in my hand: well educated. But women and power were seen as two incompatible greatneses. I were still expected to marry and breed for succession: to be a woman. While being cavalier in wearing male clothing and partaking in activities traditionally reserved for men alone: I started to experience a profound sense of alienation. I could not take on the role that men of power wanted me to play. Why should I, a woman, play a man's war-like part. I was bred as a man, despite having the weakness of being a woman - and I begin to question the favour.

The men of power looked for faults and chose the most tragic alternatives. Sweden was too conservative for me. I wanted to find myself amongst tolerant and broadminded people.

Therefore, there was no other choice other than to abdicate.

I got rid of that which wasn't me.
I changed my life - and my religion too.

So there I sat, with the crown in my hands: I had decided.

I was going to give it back.



PART TWO

My self-confidence was not great
My gendered self-perception was shattered - no doubt about that
Far within me there was an unpredictable tyrant
Can a woman rule?
Was I a woman?
Or some kind of double-gendered creature?

I was royalty: a superhuman in possession of supernatural powers
I thought that one day God or The Philosopher's Stone could perfect me into a man.

* * *

So then one day I had a uterine-prolapse:
My uterus hung out of my vagina like a club
and I registered this as an extruding male organ.
My chamber maid uttered—after having looked and felt—the long awaited words:
—Greetings King of Sweden!
I thought I had metamorphosed into a man.

This was in the 1670's.

* * *

A rumour was spread in 1937

Dr Elis Essen Möller

—a well-known gynaecologist—had read my autobiography very closely.

It was he, Dr Elis Essen Möller, who conducted a

“human-study-from-a-medical-perspective”

He stated that I was a pseudo hermaphrodite:

Intersexual –

One half woman, one half man

On the one half born with a vagina, and on the other born with a penis

I was neither clearly a woman or a man.

He attached great importance to the stories from my childbirth, particularly the one about my gender being initially mistaken for a boy. He believed that my minor interest in fashion and the fact that I was irrationally smart were reason enough for me not to be a woman.

And this would be clearly evident in the look on my genitals.

PART THREE

I was allowed to rest in peace until 1965

1965, my grave was exhumed in order to sex my gender

Yes, it was a gang of men that shouted:

— We want to dig up Queen Kristina's corpse to explore her sexual constitution!!

I ask myself: is it even possible to say something about a person's sexual constitution (whatever that is) by staring at a 400-year old skeleton?

— No, of course not!!

The quote from the exhumation was therefore something of an anticlimax for this gang of old men.

"Our flawed knowledge of intersexuality's bearings on the formation of the skeleton (see above) means that it is not possible to determine the diagnose: intersexuality."

PART FOUR

When we think of ourselves - we turn inwards. There we see and feel the various layers that exist within our spiritual self. But I—an historical figure—am analysed and reduced into something completely understandable. My irrationality seems to have fascinated and puzzled you. Lots of times I contradicted myself - but I have just explored an assortment of ideologies in search of identity.

I emerged as an individual shaped by social force. I was raised as a man and inherited men's disparaging view on women. During my lifetime I expressed misogyny in many ways. I know I've called pregnant women swollen cows. I became part of a scheme that I could neither comprehend nor control. The confusion became too stressful – and I felt victimised by my own body. How wrong, how wrong could I have been to condemn women for their weakness. And I must admit, I dream(t) of the option to have a child, but not of surrendering to the control of my biology.

* * *

Here we are again...

I am talking about my relationship to the female role,
my sexuality and personal life. You can call it gossip, if you like.

As with Elisabeth I of England and Catherine of Russia it is always our private life that are in focus.

I have played the protagonist in many fairy tales.
I have struggle(d) with difficulty to free myself from my own story.
Maybe you had the idea—like I suspect many people—that I was a shining,
pale intellectual beauty,
who had, romantically, chosen freedom.

I believe such an interest rests upon the understanding that the reconstruction of life
can never be detached from the source of the reconstruction. The lens we use to filter
my life story becomes as important as the narrative itself.

* * *

Today, I am a trendy character.
Today's fairytale is about where I was ahead of my time?
If I were a feminist, or queer?
Or maybe butch?

I don't want to be a discrete individual, fixed in time and place.
This is not a documentary.
My character has been constructed, concentrated, distilled
- and in some events changed.

This is a metaphor.

It reflects on the dilemma of the real me.

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