

Puffin Power

The Melancholic Absence of Rainbow-Colored Seabirds

ABSTRACT

Departing from the author's shared experience with Jack Halberstam at a pride march in the North Atlantic, the essay discusses the context-bound ontology of the wild and the symbolic importance of seabirds. Investigating Faroese queer activism and Swedish porn magazines it argues that LGBT initiatives are bound to fail in the absence of agents for change, and that the wild and provocative sex liberalism in the 1950s ceased to be so in the 1970s. What in the 1950s was considered a bold challenge to the existing moral order was increasingly considered an embarrassing manifestation of male chauvinism and sexual exploitation in the 1970s. Finally, the essay concludes that undoing worlds may not be the optimal way to create lasting change, but rather the plurality of resistances as outlined by Foucault.

Keywords: Queer, activism, pornography, sex liberalism, Faroe Islands, Sweden, 1950s

IN THE PREFACE to his book *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire*, Jack Halberstam (2020, ix) writes about a trip to the Faroe Islands in 2005: "The islands were too small, the sky was too big, and there was simply nowhere to hide from the weather, the climate, space, light, dark, water, sadness, and remoteness of all kinds." Reading this, bittersweet memories came to my mind, because I was there too, and I recognized all too well the forlorn feeling that Halberstam conveys. In this essay, I intend to combine Halberstam's theorization of the wild with some reflections on queer

activism in this remote area, as well as on the liberating potential of commercial porn magazines in Sweden in the 1950s and 1960s. I will argue that the wild is not an absolute and that activism is situated. There is a plurality of resistances that take different shapes in different contexts: commercial activism can transform the lives of individuals and societal structures, and failed initiatives can sow the seeds of future change.

Jack and I were invited to the Faroe Islands for a conference organized by a Nordic queer students' organization, and we encountered a society marked by homophobia and conservative Christianity. The presence of our conference did not go unnoticed, and the local press was full of attacks on queers in general and on our conference in particular, oozing with that unforgiving localism that had allowed the Faroe Islands to be the only jurisdiction in the Nordic community without any laws to protect queers – and to retain a restrictive abortion law from the 1950s. An attempt to introduce a law prohibiting discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation had been voted down 32–1 in 1988, when only one courageous Member of the Faroese Parliament, Karin Kjølbro, stood up against the majority. She subsequently left politics, disgusted by the way affairs were conducted in the male-dominated assembly. In 2005, a law on registered partnership, like the one in Denmark, was still very far from the political agenda (Rydström 2007).

In *Wild Things*, Halberstam poignantly describes this closed-off North Atlantic enclave – a part of Denmark but with its own laws and parliament. As a colonized nation, the Faroese have fought hard for their language, culture, and autonomy – a struggle, however, that has often resulted in stubborn conservatism and widespread skepticism toward all things Danish. Instead, an important source of national pride is the islands' rugged nature and distinct birdlife. As Jack noticed, a common taxidermic souvenir in the shops of the Faroese capital, Tórshavn, was a stuffed puffin. The puffin is a small seabird with a rainbow-colored beak, protected in Norway but not in the Faroes, where it is considered a delicacy. With Jack I also share the experience of buying a ticket for a seabird safari to see the living rainbow-colored birds, but, once at sea, we were told that it was late in the season and that the puff-

fins had already flown away. The omnipresent stuffed specimens, combined with the absence of living birds, were read by Halberstam (2020, xii) as a relic of something lost, “a melancholic and slightly pathetic marker of a vanishing breed.” Moreover, the stuffed, parrot-like puffins made him think of Monty Python’s “Dead Parrot Sketch” (1969), which Halberstam (2020, 115) characterized as “a perfect symbol for our time, a time in which we are already late, deceased, ex-humans masquerading as resting, stunned or momentarily incapacitated.” As an alternative reading I would rather suggest, in a more optimistic vein, that rainbow birds symbolize hope and change.

During the students’ conference, the organizers arranged the first-ever Faroese Pride March, pleading for openness, legal protection, and registered partnership, but in view of the hate speech circulating in local media, they hesitated. Would it be safe? So, even if gay marriage was not one of Jack’s political priorities, to say the least, he and his then partner, Gayatri Gopinath, took to the streets – or rather, to the gravel roads – and marched for LGBT rights in the Faroes. They chose, however, not to wave any rainbow or Faroese flags, as many others did. I mention this memory not to point to Halberstam’s long history with the Nordic region, or even to his views on a research interest of my own – the history of gay marriage (Rydström 2011). Rather, thinking of the melancholy of lost puffins and Halberstam’s contribution to the struggle for gay and lesbian rights in the Faroes, I realize that what we did *was* pretty wild in that particular time and place. Their demands were not particularly radical *per se*, but the vehement reactions in local media showed that many perceived them as wild and unacceptable. The Pride march itself was a disaster. A number of good Tórshavn burghers applauded us when we reached the city center, and a Social Democratic member of parliament gave an encouraging speech, but the overwhelming majority of Faroese were not ready to allow any alleviation whatsoever for their queer compatriots. The fledgling LGBT rights movement collapsed, and several activists fled to Denmark or Scotland. The Faroe Islands seemed frozen in an uncompromising dismissal of queer lives and worlds. It was too early in the season, and the puffins had not yet arrived.



[Illustration 1. Jack and Gayatri in Tórshavn Pride Parade 2005]

In *Wild Things*, Halberstam presented a number of definitions of wildness. What caught my attention, however, was the one at the very beginning: “Wildness names simultaneously a chaotic force of nature, the outside of categorization, unrestrained forms of embodiment, the refusal to submit to social regulation, loss of control, the unpredictable” (Halberstam 2020, 3). For have not queer lives always been lived outside of categorization, in spite of regulatory forces’ efforts to pin them down? Indeed, have not most sexual and gendered expressions, save the precious few that are blessed by the Church, existed in what Judith Butler (2000, 78) calls “perpetual catachresis” – an undefined space where no agreed-upon words or concepts cover what queer folks do or what they are? A recurring thread in Halberstam’s book is the voyage into the wild, and back again, ventured by Max, the antihero of Maurice Sendak’s illustrated children’s book *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963). Max sails to the land where the wild things are, subdues them with his

gaze, and leads them in a wild dance. “Let the wild rumpus start!” This escape from the regulated world of adults, Halberstam argues, ends with a return to the normal. In subduing the wild things, Max *becomes* the parents he has resisted and fled from, and in the end he returns to the safety and warmth of his home. “And so, home he goes, lured by the smell of his mother’s cooking, and he reenters the home, perhaps in the absence of any other truly wild space to go” (Halberstam, 2020, 132).

Indeed, at the end of *Wild Things*, Halberstam presents a radical demand:

If the wild has anything to tell us, it is this: unbuild the world you inhabit, unmake its relentless commitment to the same, ignore the calls for more, and agree to be with the wild, accept the wild, give yourself to the wild, and float down or drown in its embrace. (Halberstam 2020, 180)

In this essay, I take inspiration from Halberstam’s notion of the wild in order to discuss a rather different trip into the wild and back again – one that took place Sweden in the mid-twentieth century and has intrigued me in recent years. Between 2018 and 2023, I was part of a Scandinavian research project on LGBTQ activism in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden from 1948 to the present. We studied various aspects of queer activism – lesbian, gay, and trans – as a transnational phenomenon and aimed to steer away from the methodological nationalism that characterizes most research on queer history (Edelberg 2024, 2025). In this context, I focused on identity and community building through commercial pornographic magazines. An important source of inspiration for this project was David K. Johnson’s (2019) work on U.S. physique magazines, in which he has shown how these publications were instrumental in the construction of gay identity in the 1950s. In what follows, I discuss how Swedish porn magazines aimed at a straight audience could also serve to build queer subjectivities.

Someone who certainly took a journey into the wild in the late twentieth century was pornographic publisher Kurt Hugo Nilsson (1924–1988), also known as Curth Hson (pronounced Haw-son). He was born

in 1924 into a petty-bourgeois family in Boden, a small town in the northernmost part of Sweden. His father was the city accountant, and Hson always emphasized that he had received a good upbringing and education. Somewhat surprisingly, in the 1950s and 1960s, this man became a herald of free sexuality. While he certainly made a lot of money from his trade, Hson was also seen by many as a brave precursor of the sexual revolution. In Sweden, the generational rebellion that was ignited all over the Western world in the 1960s placed a particular emphasis on sexuality and morals (Lennerhed 2014). As I will show, this provided an opportunity for Curth Hson to reach a wider readership that shared his sex-liberal convictions.

The flagship of Hson's pornographic empire was *Piff*, published from 1954 and continuing until two years before his death. Three years later, *Raff* appeared, and in 1962, *Paff* followed. While Hson made attempts to differentiate the contents of his three publications and to aim them at different audiences, they ended up looking rather similar, with the possible exception that *Raff* contained more queer material in the early 1970s. His magazines were published weekly, biweekly, or monthly until 1986 – altogether more than 2,100 issues, a true goldmine of human perversion in the university library's collections. Moreover, access to these materials is not restricted, since they contained no underage models.

It was Swedish gender scholar Signe Bremer who first called my attention to this rich source for the history of sexuality. Bremer was the first to study Hson's publications as queer history, tracing within them possible world-makings for non-normative genders in the 1960s. Using queer temporality as an analytical tool, Bremer demonstrated how contact ads, letters to the editor, and editors' responses made room for negotiations and dreams of queer lives and differently gendered futures (Bremer 2023). Their research inspired me to study other queer expressions in Hson's magazines as well. While economic historian Klara Arnberg has also studied Hson's magazines, her main focus was not their contents but rather their place in the growing porn market (Arnberg 2010).

One thing that struck me, as a historian of homosexuality and other non-normative sexual and gendered expressions – such as sex work, sex

and disability, trans history, and bestiality – was a conspicuous *absence* in Hson’s publications (Rydström 2003, 2021; Kulick & Rydström 2015; Rydström & Tjeder 2021). There is no mention whatsoever of the wildest sexual crime of all – that of bestiality. Swedish author Ivar Lo-Johansson (1901–1990) is one of the few who has treated this particular practice in literary form. “We were a herding people”, he wrote in his autobiography from 1978, remarking that in Sweden animals had always been better treated and cared for than humans, and also that one could become close friends with some of them (Lo-Johansson 1978, 301). “The step was not far, for a boy who could not find girls willing to meet him in his lust, to think that we could also share physical love with the animals,” he wrote (*ibid.*). The animals of the farm openly showed their heat, and the females of the larger animals, which had female names, became attractive to Lo-Johansson’s young self. “It was the vague idea of a kind of pansexuality (*allsexualitet*), although we did not have that word” (*ibid.*). (All translations from Swedish are my own.) He also tenderly describes how he engaged in sexual intercourse with the heifer he loved. “I cautiously caressed her, and the animal lifted its tail as if she wanted to make it easier for me to get there” (Lo-Johansson 1978, 303).

In his memoir, Lo-Johansson invokes a time in the countryside when “everybody” knew of people who “went to the animals,” even if the practice was taboo, criminal, and deeply shameful (Lo-Johansson 1978, 301). But there is a before and an after, as Halberstam notes (2020, 16): “The transformation of animals from sexual partners to pets, a definition of domestication if ever there was one, indicates other kinds of shifts in the way we have perceived the natural and the perverse, the domestic and the wild, the sexual and the intimate.” Consequently, bestiality seemed to be off-limits even for the most unprejudiced of sex radicals in the 1960s. Hson’s publications, daring as they were, lacked any traces of this age-old sexual practice.

Thus, there was no room for intimacy between humans and animals in Hson’s publications, but there was ample space for most varieties of human-to-human sexuality. Two possible factors may explain this absence. To begin with, there was probably little demand for animal

pornography. Hson's magazines were modern products, aimed at a modern, pro-sex readership, and bestiality was not part of any progressive sexual discourse in the mid-twentieth century. Another possible explanation is that Hson wanted to steer clear of legal prosecution. He was, in fact, prosecuted and sentenced to a fine and the seizure of an issue of *Piff* in 1956. On that occasion, the sentence was not motivated by visual material, but by contact ads, "the contents and vocabulary of which were such, that it clearly showed that the advertisers' purpose was solely to obtain sexual intercourse with other individuals" (Arnberg 2010, 124).

The act of bestiality per se was not illegal in Sweden in the 1950s, since it had been decriminalized together with homosexual acts between adults in 1944. It was, however, to be recriminalized in 2014, not by an article in the Penal Code, but by a statute in the Animal Protection Act, where an exemption is given for "actions undertaken for veterinary medical purposes or in connection with breeding or other similar legitimate reasons" (Djurskyddslag 2018:1192, chap. 2 sec. 10). This, to my mind, proves the point Halberstam makes – namely that bestiality laws are not primarily for the protection of animals but "for the maintenance of the financialization of livestock populations" (Halberstam 2020, 122; cf. Rosenberg 2017).

But let us return to the actual contents of Hson's magazines and not dwell on conspicuous absences. As Signe Bremer (2023) has shown, contact between editors and readers was essential to Hson's publishing project. From early on, Hson engaged the readers in contests and encouraged them to contact him with their own pictures, questions, or comments. As mentioned, he had developed a lively section of personal advertisements, and already in 1956 the first person seeking a partner of the same sex published this ad:

AMPLE FEMALE PIFF READER 40 y.o., looking for intimate letter exchange with cultivated woman interested in literature and photography. Answ. to "Lesbos."
(*Piff* 3[1] 1956, 56)

Six months later, the first male signatory who dared to ask for company wrote:

YOUNG MAN 22 y.o., feeling lonely, seeks experienced gentleman as pen friend. Answ. to “The Friend.” (*Piff* 3[12] 1956, 55)

Six weeks later, a more daring request was published, this time from Norway:

OSLO MAN, 55, seeking contact with young Oslo boy aged 18–20, who wants strict, old-fashioned education. [...] Answ. to “Carrot and Stick.” (*Piff* 3[15] 1956, 55)

Dominance and submission were frequently themes in Hson’s publications, and in the 1950s “old-fashioned education” was often used as a euphemism for BDSM. This use of language followed a long public debate about banning corporal punishment in schools. A recurrent argument in the political legislative process and media discussions was that spanking schoolchildren might trigger sadist impulses in teachers and turn children into masochists or sadists (Herburt, forthcoming). In fact, Hson’s magazines were not the only ones that published contact ads for people seeking same-sex partners. The Swedish Federation for Equal Sexual Rights (RFSL) membership publication *Följeslagaren* (The Companion) ran contact ads for its members from 1955, and the gay and lesbian correspondence club *Albatross* from 1953 (Edelberg 2024). The difference was that ads in Hson’s publications reached a wider audience and that their contents could be more explicitly sexual, especially since RFSL regularly censored contact ads with even the slightest suggestion of “sadist or masochistic content,” as an editor wrote to a prospective advertiser in 1963 (Wasniowski 2007, 200).

The treatment of race in Hson’s publications would merit its own investigation. Suffice it here to say that the most obvious trait was the overall absence of bodies of color – the vast majority of the bodies exposed in his magazines were white. Over the years, however,

there was a change in representation of the few nonwhite bodies that appeared in the magazines. Early issues contained several feature articles about “barbaric customs,” with pictures of African dance rituals or body adornments (*Piff* 1[1] 1954, 17–19; *Piff* 1[15] 1954, 13–17). For, as Halberstam (2020, 178) remarks, “Blackness and indigeneity indeed are cast within Euro-American modernism as a form of wildness that must be conquered and as a restless force of living dead that can be tapped for labor.” In later volumes, however, the exposure of nonwhite bodies tended to become more individualized, eroticized, and fetishized, while remaining inscribed in the generalized racist discourse of the time (*Piff* 17[9] 1971, 56; *Raff* 16[6] 1972, 16–25) and affording no agency whatsoever. Overall, the vast majority of bodies in Hson’s publications were white throughout the period under study.

While there is an underrepresentation of blackness in the magazines, Hson showed a great interest in gender variance and trans experience, and here too, we see changes over time in its representation. In the earlier issues, the tone was sensationalist and voyeuristic, melodramatically proclaiming that “She became a he” or “He became a she,” and showing pictures of trans people before and after transition (*Piff* 1[4] 1954, 14–17). Over the years, however, the tenor became more respectful, as Hson began publishing texts that were actually authored by trans people themselves (Marianne 1966). In 1958, one reader even dubbed Hson “the transvestites’ best friend” and suggested that readers interested in cross-dressing or trans experiences form a club (*Piff* 5[13] 1958, 21). As discussed by Bremer (2023), the word *transvestite* was generally used by people with trans experience who wrote to Hson’s magazines. It covered, however, a much broader range of experiences than today and could be compared to the contemporary use of the term transgender person (*transperson*). Also, following Harsin Emmer Drager and Lucas Platero (2021), Bremer notes that transvestites, although extensively stigmatized in history – and despite the fact that many people define themselves as transvestites today – have never been at the core of either trans activism or trans studies.

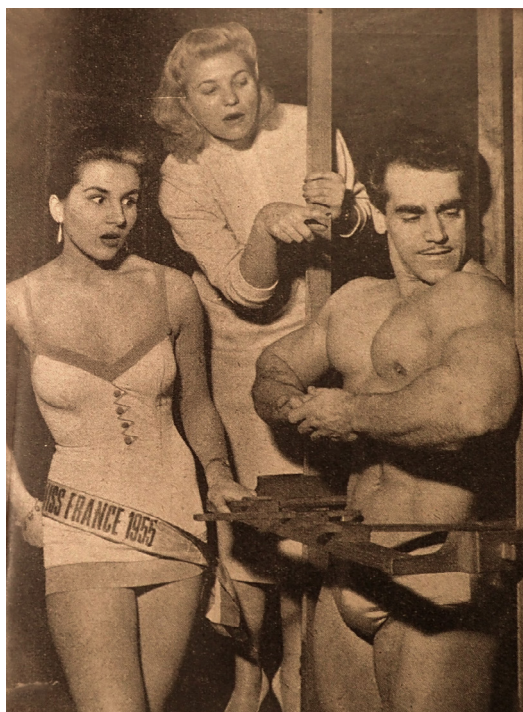
Hson’s desire to connect with his readership also prompted him to open his columns to advice and counselling. In December 1956, a wor-

ried mother wrote that her seventeen-year-old son had been caught wearing one of her dresses. His father gave him a severe beating, she wrote, while she herself was more concerned that her son's cross-dressing might make him a homosexual. Hson replied that her son might well already be a homosexual, since the urge to dress in female clothes was often connected to homosexuality. "But give him understanding instead of punishment," he advised her (*Piff* 3[21]1956, 23). His answer resonates with the sociomedical discourse of the time, which conflated same-sex desire and trans experience – a conflation that was to be challenged by gay and lesbian, as well as trans, activists in the 1970s and 1980s (Rydström & Tjeder 2021, 202).

In the early 1950s, Hson made friends with some of the most influential gay activists, including high school teacher and author Nils Hallbeck, who sometimes contributed to Hson's porn magazines and who also published a number of novels and poetry collections with Hson's publishing house. Hallbeck belonged to an earlier generation of discreet homophiles, invested in the classical Greek ideals of man-boy love, and, under the pseudonym Jan Hogan, he wrote a number of sad, romantic stories about adolescent boys who fell hopelessly in love with their teachers (Hallbeck 1951, 1954). Danish historian Peter Edelberg has shown how Nils Hallbeck's ideas about intergenerational sex were contested by the majority within RFSL in the early 1950s. The majority's standpoint at the time was that homosexuals should be bound by the same set of legal restrictions as heterosexuals (Edelberg 2024).

When Hson published the first male model in 1956, it was a bodybuilder surrounded by two admiring women (*Piff* 3[7]1956, 11). This prompted an immediate reaction from one of the readers, who wrote:

No muscle snobs! No, give us healthier, sounder men than the rather disgusting type you presented in your last issue. I'd suggest that you study the American physique magazines. [...] In particular, I'd like to argue for my special favorites, namely Jerry Ross, Richard Alan, Glenn Bishop, and Steve Reeves. (*Piff* 3[15] 1956, 20)



[Illustration 2. "Muscle snob"]

The reader in question clearly had extensive knowledge of U.S. physique magazines and their models, and perhaps also a more developed sense of gay aesthetics than Hson himself. At any rate, his request initiated a stream of letters from the readership asking for more male models.

The craving for male nudity seemed to be growing in the 1960s, and Hson struggled to meet the demand by publishing imported American material as well as advertising for "uncensored" male nudes that could be ordered from his combined tobacco and porn shop in Stockholm. He told his readers that there was a shortage of male models and that they needed to be patient. Whether this was true – or whether Hson simply had to pay too much for the American photographs – the situation changed in 1965. That year, he began publishing Swedish-made nude photographs from Studio FotoGrafo in Sundbyberg, north of Stock-

holm. The imagery largely followed the aesthetics of American physique magazines, with the notable difference that the Swedish photos more often displayed full frontal nudity, the models were not circumcised, and U.S. Navy uniform fetishes were replaced by those of the Swedish Navy.

There was, of course, the problem of the erect penis. In 1965, the signature “Danish Adam” wrote to the editors and asked if erect penises were indeed immoral:

Why don't you publish pictures of men with a stiff weenie (*stiv tisse-mand*)? There's nothing immoral about that. It must be acceptable that your women [readers] may see the male member in that way. (*Paff* 4[12] 1965, 74)

To which the signature “Angry from Småland” retorted:

I'd like to answer the signature “Danish Adam.” I can't remember seeing any pictures of men with “stiff weenies” (*stiv tissemand*) in Danish magazines, and I suggest he turn to the magazines in Denmark with his request. In this country, we understand why one cannot publish such pictures. (*Paff* 5[5] 1966, 74)

Again, the reason for not publishing erect penises was probably that Hson wanted to steer clear of prosecution. After the pornography ban in Sweden had been lifted, in 1971, there were erect penises galore in his magazines. In its context, the 1965 letter exchange shows both that Hson had a Scandinavian readership and that the mixture of straight and gay sexuality was appealing to a generation of men who were not really satisfied with the rather meek Danish gay publications at the time. These exchanges also fed into the never-ending bickering between Swedes and Danes in matters of morality.

In the earlier issues, the male nudes were officially published for the benefit of Hson's female readership. Many readers signed letters to the editor with female names, asking for more male nudity. Others signed

as straight couples, stating that both partners enjoyed Hson's new style of pornography, but that the wife was disappointed by the scarcity of male models. Some of these readers may, of course, have been closeted gay men using female pseudonyms, which raises the question of how large the female readership really was. However, the many contact ads published by women seeking male and female sex partners may be an indication that many women did, in fact, read and enjoy the magazines. Later on, some women also contributed actively to the written content.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Hson recruited several Swedish intellectuals to contribute to his publications, including a young Lars Norén (1944–2021), who later became a renowned playwright. In 1967, Norén published a sadomasochistic story entitled "Love Now and Die Later," about a secret agent who is kidnapped by a drug cartel and wakes up tied to a hospital table in India, where he is tortured by a beautiful Asian nurse (Norén 1967). In addition, Marxist author and literary critic Per Meurling (1906–1984) contributed several articles on sexual history and culture, including a comprehensive appraisal of Jean Genet's work (Meurling 1965).

In 1966, lesbian author Annakarin Svedberg (b. 1934) contributed an essay on promiscuity, pleading for a more understanding attitude from the moral majority.

I would wish for people to ease up their attitudes to sexual life and human existence in general, so that both monogamy and promiscuity might be allowed to live side by side according to people's free choice and be met by the same respect from all – regardless of what life form one has chosen for oneself. (Svedberg 1966, 15)

Svedberg had acquired national fame in 1965 when she published a short story called "The Wolf and Little Red Riding Hood," about a wolf, a grandmother, and a young girl. The girl is bored with the orderly life in town and longs to visit her granny, who lives in a hut in the woods, deals with drugs, and knows how to party. On her way to granny's hut, she

meets the wolf, who runs ahead of her and has steaming sex with the grandmother. When she arrives, Little Red Riding Hood joins in, and when the murderous hunter arrives, she persuades him to drop his gun and take part in the orgy. During the confusion, the hunter mistakenly inserts his penis in the wolf's anus. "The hunter fondled a shaggy body. He fondled breasts, and his cock felt good in a hole. It felt so damn good!" (Svedberg 1965, 136). He comes to his senses, reaches for his gun, and again wants to kill them all, but when the others struggle to disarm him, his penis starts swelling again. In a compelling ending, the hunter asks the others to throw away his gun and deliver him from killing. "Free me from death and allow me to fuck – come, wolf! Come! My dick is big! Come!" (Svedberg 1965, 138).

This foursome between the wolf, granny, Little Red Riding Hood, and the hunter calls to mind the scandalous sculpture by Ines Doujak, *Not Dressed for Conquering* (2016), which Halberstam (2020, 129) reads in light of Jacques Derrida's *The Beast and the Sovereign* (2011). Doujak's sculpture depicts a threesome involving Bolivian feminist and labor leader Domitila Chúnigara fucking former Spanish king Juan Carlos with a dildo, alongside a dog- or wolf-like figure, that penetrates Chúnigara from behind. Halberstam notes that it is the wolf that occupies the powerful position of not being penetrated, but both Chúnigara and the wolf are standing upright, "as potential partners," while Juan Carlos is on all fours, being sodomized by Chúnigara (Halberstam 2020, 129). Using Derrida's words, the sovereign here is subdued by the two upright figures, but in Svedberg's pornographic story, the murderous hunter as sovereign is subdued by the beast and the child – not by being penetrated but by being seduced. In the end, the hunter is disarmed and pacified, happily joining the big rumpus. Thus, the protagonists in Svedberg's story have entered the wild – the woods – and within this wilderness inverted the power relations of the ordinary.

Svedberg's 1965 story was published in a collection of high-quality pornographic texts, *Kärlek 1–14* (1965–1970), edited by author Bengt Anderberg (1920–2008). The *Kärlek* booklets were written at a time

when a good number of intellectuals, both men and women, seemed to enjoy consuming and writing pornography. In total, thirty-two men and fourteen women contributed to the series. Historian of ideas Lena Lennerhed has pointed out that the presence of women as contributors to a pornographic collection was not an issue that was discussed or problematized at the time, neither by the authors themselves nor by others (Lennerhed 1994, 194).

In 1970, Annakarin Svedberg joined Hson's productions as editor of the *Raff* section "We [Who Are] Different," which reported on queer issues and the LGBTQ movement's struggle for lesbian, gay, and trans rights. She was later replaced by Danish-born author Henning Pallesen (1925–2008), known for his 1964 book *The Deviant* (Pallesen 1964). Pallesen reconfigured the section so that it appeared in the form of fold-out pages, with Pallesen's pipe-smoking head at the top. The section became even more inclusive and political, with headings such as "Our Politicians and the Sexually Deviant" and "The Normal – Our Only Minority Problem" (Pallesen 1970, 1971a). Lesbian and trans issues were well represented, as in "Lesbian Love Is at its Best when the Boots Come Out" and "The Doctor Did Not Know How to Spell Transvestite!" (O.E. 1970; Anonymous 1971).

In contrast, Nils Hallbeck was recruited as editor of "Homosex Corner," a two-page section dedicated exclusively to gay themes, suggesting a distinction between unambiguously gay sensitivities and more inclusive queer identities. In Pallesen's section, however, under the heading "Wipe Away the Borders," Pallesen enthusiastically wrote about a joint initiative between RFSL and a "transvestite association" (probably Club Transvestia, founded in 1964) to establish a joint counseling service for "sexual minorities." He also pleaded for greater cooperation and unity among different forms of queer experience. "Why is it so desperately hard for the different minorities to cooperate?" he asked (Pallesen 1971b). The difficulties he referred to may reflect an already ongoing transition toward a more compartmentalized queer movement, in which stricter boundaries were being drawn between trans and homosexual identities (Rydström & Tjeder 2021, 202).

When pornography was released in Sweden in 1971, the pictures in Hson's publications became more explicitly anatomical, and the queer content gradually vanished. At the same time, Hson's position as a friend of homosexuals was challenged. In 1971, he attended the annual meeting of RFSL and afterwards congratulated "all deviants," as he put it, on the fact that RFSL now had chapters or contact persons throughout the country. He generously published their addresses, but in the subsequent issue he complained that RFSL had called him up and yelled at him for publishing the contact information, which was only intended for internal use. He was hurt and lectured the queer movement that "If you want to succeed in reaching sexual equality, you should at least stand up for your views, appear publicly, and spread information. It's easy to be radical if you don't have to be it in public" (*Raff* 25/1971). In his enthusiasm for a generalized sexual revolution, though, it seems that he had underestimated the risks of being openly gay or lesbian in a small town in Sweden in the early 1970s.

In spite of this controversy, however, he continued to mix gay porn into his publications, and from the early 1970s he also published pictures of erect penises and homosexual intercourse. At times this provoked negative reactions from straight male readers, and in 1977 the signature "Angry Lumberjack" (*Arg skogis*) wrote:

Sex magazines are supposed to be exciting for normal people, dammit!
You buy the mag to see some proper cunts and not two goddamned fairies
licking each other's dicks or shitholes! The dick should be in the cunt, and
that's that! It's just disgusting to watch faggots! (*Piff* 24[8] 1977, 3, 48)

Hson published the letter and wrote in response that Lumberjack was probably beyond rescue, a prisoner of his own prejudice: "We can only feel sorry for him." He also repeated his commitment to presenting all sexual tastes as expressions of human desire (*Piff* 24[8] 1977, 48).

Thus, in the 1950s and 1960s, rainbow puffins were flying over Hson's head. He could be wild in a time of sexual revolution, his sex-positive messages resonated well with the younger generation, and he was well

connected to Swedish sex radicals. Over the years, however, this generation of activists was succeeded by younger ones who did not necessarily subscribe to Hson's views on sexual liberation. This shift coincided with radical feminist campaigns against pornography and prostitution, as well as a leftist feminist critique of the commercialization of sex and women's bodies.

"Aren't You Ever Ashamed?" asks a headline in an evening tabloid in 1980. In the interview, Hson is portrayed as a has-been and tells the reporter, "People who call me a dirty old man (snuskhummer) don't know what they're talking about. Four or five years ago, porn was fashionable. Everybody liked porn. Now it's out" (Helmersson 1980). It was now late in the season and the puffins had flown away.

Curth Hson was indeed a rebel of his time. He went into the wild, creating multifaceted pornographic magazines and seeing himself as a sexual educator. He insisted on publishing texts by de Sade, Balzac, Rétif de la Bretonne, and other libertines, alongside juicy pornographic novels about dominance and submission and explicit nude images that became increasingly daring. But his particular variety of wildness rapidly went out of fashion, and he ended his days as a bitter, but very wealthy, former sexual anarchist.

Thinking with Halberstam's notion of the wild, Hson sought to unbuild the world he inhabited, unmake its relentless commitment to the same, and ignore its calls for more. He was convinced that by publicizing expressions of unbound sexuality he could indeed change the world. In a sense, his economic success proved to him that the sexual tastes and cravings of a great many people fell outside the narrow boundaries of received morality and that by bringing them out in the open might lead to lasting change. Thus, he agreed to be with the wild, accept the wild, and give himself to it. He floated down and drowned in its embrace, but was ultimately washed away by the currents of time.

And what about the rainbow-beaked puffins in the Faroes? The queer activists there did not try to unbuild the world they inhabited, but presented rather humble proposals. And they failed miserably. It took almost a decade before new queer activism began to sprout, when one

of the original organizers of the march, journalist Sonja Jógvansdóttir, returned from Scotland and began rebuilding the movement. This time, she and a handful of younger activists did not arrange a march but a party, engaging good musicians and insisting that queer was cool. Over two thousand people showed up – a huge turnout for the size of the islands – and thanks to her newly acquired popularity, Jógvansdóttir was elected to parliament on a Social Democratic ballot. When her party, predictably, broke their promises of pro-queer legislation, she immediately left it and became an independent MP. Threatening to topple the government, she forced her former Social Democratic colleagues, grudgingly, to introduce a bill on gay marriage (Jógvansdóttir 2016; Róin 2015). The puffins had finally arrived.

My point here, I guess, is that everything happens in a particular time and place, and that, depending on the context, undoing the world one inhabits may not be the best way to achieve lasting change for the better. I would rather let myself be inspired by Foucault's (1990, 95–96) words about power and resistance:

Hence there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations. (Foucault 1990, 95–96)

Foucault's words resonate with Halberstam's argument in *Wild Things*, where the vocabulary of wildness consists of a plurality of resistances. Most of them are doomed to fail, but, like the unsuccessful queer uprising in the Faroes in 2005, they exist within a field of power relations, representing forms of resistance to power that contribute not to the undoing of the world we inhabit, but perhaps to pushing it in less oppressive directions

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