

"Alla dessa duktiga kvinnor" – om rätten att representera sig själv i det offentliga samtalet ('All these talented women' - the Right to Represent Oneself in Public). Dissertation at the Department of Ethnology, Göteborg University. Author: Kerstin Lökken. Written in Swedish with an English summary. Skrifter från Etnologiska föreningen i Västsverige & Göteborgs Stadsmuseum, 2002

This dissertation illustrates the complex of problems in various *speeches* arising when women enter the stage of public discourse. Besides being subject to various perceptions of how women *are* and how they *ought to be*, they have fought from a subordinated position for the right to represent themselves in the public discourse. They have broken into an arena that has not offered a natural stage for them to stand on. The dissertation also illustrates that assuming the speaker's chair was controversial for women at the end of the 1700s, during the 1800s as well as at the 1900s.

This book takes its starting point in a local women's association, *Göteborgs Kvinnliga Diskussionsklubb* (Eng. Gothenburg's Women's Discussion Club, hereinafter abbreviated GKDK). The focus is GKDK's public activities and the member's recollections during the period of 1911-1970. The goal of the association was to give women both the information and the tools necessary to understand and become actively involved in societal affairs. To illustrate both the continuity and the change concerning women's difficulties entering the stage of the public sphere, two previous epochs is visited. Women's circumstances and possibilities generally in the wake of French Revolution is discussed in a broader perspective. The consequences of the publishing of a novel 1886 in a local magazine focuses on who would be awarded precedence of interpretation for how the whole women's emancipation movement in Sweden would be pursued.

Empirically this dissertation is mainly based on records, press cuttings as well as interviews with members of GKDK. Theoretically and methodically discourses take a prominent place and should be understood as the *speeches* and *understandings* that arise in the debates and the informants' recollections. The focus in the dissertation lies on the contradictory *speeches* about gender—here in discussions about female/male—and about class, which are reflected both at the societal level as well as in individual experiences. The dissertation focuses on how different *speeches* are employed in different contexts depending on whether spoken from the perspective of woman/man, married/unmarried, association member/individual and so forth. Another aim is to explain the complex of problems that can arise in ascribing women to a homogenous collective identity supposing that all have the same circumstances and experiences.

The struggle for women during the time has been about the right to act and speak based on their own circumstances. The obvious consequence today is that, in similar ways, new groups are demanding to plead their causes. They do not wish to be represented by others instead they are demanding the democratic right to represent themselves in public discourse.

Keywords: gender, class, *speeches*, citizenship, power relations, the public and the private sphere
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