

Marianne Liljeström

"All-embracing feminism: about epistemic habits and gestures within Nordic academic feminism"

Critique is one of the foundational characteristics of feminist and queer studies, internally aligned with questions of knowledge production, research ethics and the politics of academic work. Simultaneously critical thinking permeates feminist understandings and envisioning of transformation and emancipation. Current debates about critique, new reading modes and queer methods show an increasing awareness of some deep-rooted, well-established, and sometimes almost self-evident epistemic habits that reside within feminist thinking. For example, the emphasis on inclusive/universalist reasoning in spite of the constant underlining of the importance of differences and diversity of identities. Many feminist researchers have also noticed how discussions on intersectionality have turned into routine gestures, and how the demand of necessary positionality and about complicity of upholding certain hierarchies (for example, white hegemony) have turned into certain epistemic habits (Aldrin Salskov 2020, Carbin & Edenheim 2013, Dahl 2021).

In my presentation, I discuss routinized epistemic gestures in connection to a growing all-inclusiveness of feminism, especially typical within a hegemonic, convergentist, Nordic feminism. This feminism is characterized by a strong uniformity and cohesion around its declared progressive character concerning gender equality politics. Here I refer to discussions about a contemporary mainstream feminism tightly connected to gender binarity, femininity, whiteness, and hetero- and cis-normativity. However, I also ponder about routine gestures and universalist, non-problematized habits not as used-up, but as useful for further critical reflection.

I conclude my talk asking how in the midst of a strong culture of consensus and all-inclusiveness are we to take into consideration the existence of multiple feminisms, their inner conflicts and controversies? Here I discuss questions linked to both dis-identification and feminist reflexivity. Besides functioning as identity and community, academic feminism is importantly and above all a critique involving diverse theoretical traditions and current conflicting opinions and discrepancies of views and visions.

Bio



Marianne Liljeström is Professor (emerita) of Gender Studies at the University of Turku, Finland. Her research fields include Nordic and Russian/Soviet gender history with special perspective on the formation of Women's and Gender studies as academic disciplines; second, autobiographical examination of selves, identities and memory, and third, theoretical discussions on feminist and queer epistemologies, critique, experience, affects and habitual thinking. She has published articles widely on these subjects, and she is the author of *Useful Selves. Russian Women's Autobiographical Texts from the Postwar Period* (2004), co-editor of *Working with Affect in Feminist Readings: Disturbing Differences* (2010, with Susanna Paasonen) and of the special issue of the journal *Feminist Encounters, A Critique of Our Own? On the Epistemic Habits of Academic Feminism* (2017, with Salla Peltonen) and co-author of *The Geopolitics of Nordic and Russian Gender Research 1975-2005* (2016, with Ulrika Dahl and Ulla Manns). Currently her main interest is in exploring timelines and history of academic feminism.