

Stureplan People

racial fantasy and human reality in today's Sweden

J. Lorand Matory

Stockholm, 13–18 September, 2014

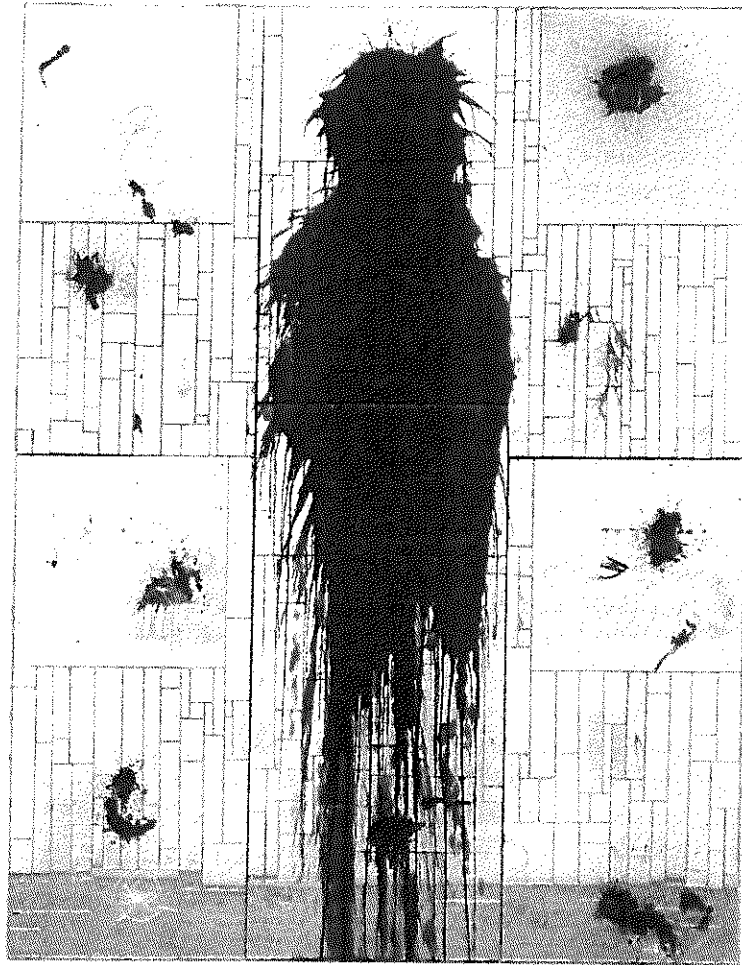
“THERE IS A rumor that Stureplan people have no souls,” said my momentary companion at a bar called East, one of the more highly recommended places to see and be seen on Stureplan Square, the center of Stockholm’s most elite commercial and residential district. In a body-hugging black dress cut low in the back, she had bleached her hair to a platinum blond, set off dramatically by its deep-black roots. She added, though, that there are “Stureplan people” and “true Stureplan people.” During the week that I spent in Sweden, amid and after the 2014 national elections, I answered this siren call, pursuing the “true Stureplan people” down the infinite regress of double-mirror images seen by Swedes inspecting the nether regions of their own national soul. While the media focused on native Swedish angst about the dark “refugee” in their midst, I discovered a white Swedish “other” that looms equally large as an antitype of national identity.

In the 2014 national elections, resistance to immigration was a central issue. The birthplace of Alfred Nobel, founder of the eponymous Peace Prize, Sweden tends to regard itself as a “moral superpower.”

However, as an African American anthropologist, I was less surprised by most Swedes’ clichés about the dark immigrant than by the even more passionate words I heard about Stureplan people, a mysterious subset of their white countrymen. The Holy Grail of my visit had been one of the world’s finest collections of African sacred power objects, or *minkisi*, which is housed at the national ethnological museum. Since the late fifteenth century, Europeans have accused Africans of falsely projecting divinity onto natural and manufactured things, such as these *minkisi*. Yet

I was less surprised by most Swedes’ clichés about the dark immigrant than by the even more passionate words I heard about Stureplan people, a mysterious subset of their white countrymen.

is he
n in
k of
se I
o do
, be-
put
feel
ways
his
nted
t to
urt.
ting
and
rels,
aces
ght
ver-
; ev-
with
uld
his
me,
her
ng.
an't



Them.
Mirrored tile,
black soap, wax.
274.3 × 215.9 ×
6.4 cm. © 2014
Rashid Johnson.
Courtesy the
artist and Hauser
& Wirth.

the cult of relics, the attribution of healing powers to holy fountains, miraculous statues and paintings, the adoration of Mary-shaped frost on window panes, and the Eucharist itself suggest that Europeans and Euro-Americans—no more or less rightly than Africans—project divinity onto concrete and, often, manufactured things. Perhaps the defining forms of fetishism in Europe and the United States today are the cult of identity-construction through consumer goods, their misrecognition as sources of personal happiness and fulfillment, and the construction

of social Others as angels or demons. My off-hours, away from the Stockholm ethnological museum, lifted a veil on the American fetish that is “Europe,” dazzling me with some realities of race and class on the “Old Continent” that my American education had previously made inconceivable.

In Scandinavia, I had halfway expected to meet the ideal forms of humanity that my conservative white countrymen had projected onto northern Europe in the service of white supremacy and their leftist counterparts had projected as proof that social democracy can be perfect. Though no less phantasmic, Stureplan people offered me a much more subtle lesson about the human realities behind distant idylls, and behind social antitypes as well.

The “true Stureplan people,” said Ms. Platinum, are *actually* rich and aren’t just putting on a show to that effect. They often have an apartment in Stureplan or a house in the Stockholm suburb of Lidingö, as well as a summer home on remote and exclusive Gotland Island. The women are blonde, but most of them artificially so. The men have perfect haircuts, swept and gelled back. The popular name of their hairstyle, *kottlettfrilla*, derives from the fact that, to Swedish novelist Jan Guillou, it looks as though it has been combed with a greasy “pork-chop.” Stureplan men often wear pink shirts, skinny-leg trousers, or fluorescent khakis with the legs rolled up, loafers without socks, and gold-buttoned blue blazers cinched below the ribs and hemmed just below the tailbone.

Stureplan people reportedly speak in an affected way (*tillgjort*), adding a “zh” sound before the letter “i” in their words and over-extending their vowels. “*Vii ärr frain Liiidingööö*,” for example, instead of the usual “*Vi är från Lidingö*,” meaning, “We are from Lidingö.” And they *stekar*. *Stekare* is a slang term for “acting fancy,” or showing off, not a behavior normally appreciated in Sweden’s egalitarian culture. Their favorite places to *steka* are bars like East, Spy Bar, and Riche, or nightclubs like Sturecompagniet, Laroy, Nosh, and Show. They reportedly make a profession of being seen, and they like nothing more than to appear drinking champagne in the online magazine *Finest.se*.

But they are most famous for the allegation that they *vaskar*. No one whom I met during my mid-September 2014 visit to Stockholm and Uppsala had ever seen it, but most had heard of it. In better economic times, Stureplan people would reportedly go to a club, buy two bottles of champagne, and drink only one. The other they would publicly pour down the drain. Today, they reportedly buy two hamburgers and throw

Ms. Platinum was the only person who actually admitted to being a Stureplan person. Yet she described her people as “materialistic” and “shallow.”

ountains,
ped frost
beans and
ect divini-
e defining
e the cult
ognition
struction

one of them away. Ms. Platinum was the only person I talked to during that week who actually admitted to being a Stureplan person—whether a “true” Stureplan person or not, I do not know. Yet she described her people as “materialistic” and “shallow.” In middle age, the men cheat on their wives, taking twenty-year-old girls to Stockholm hotels. She said that she and her female friends had experienced this phenomenon firsthand. She had no answer, though, when I asked her to tell me about “Stureplan women.” So, even in her case, “Stureplan people” was an invective for *someone else*. To her, Stureplan people are “broken souls, drowning in shallow things.” When she met me at East, Platinum had come with two Norwegian men, one of whom, to my eye, perfectly fit the sartorial profile of the Stureplan person, but he denied that Norwegians could ever be so ostentatious. For him, too, the Stureplan person was the Other.

Swedish people tend to regard their society as economically and socially egalitarian and report this ideal in terms of *jantelagen*, the refusal to recognize distinction or achievements, a secondary effect of which is often personal modesty. Even the tales I heard about the Swedish royal family focused on the dyslexia of the king and his son, as well as the wisdom of the princes’ having married commoners whose backgrounds are impressive because of their adequate performance of undistinguished premarital jobs. Hence, even the popular imagination of Swedish royalty embraces the logic of *jantelagen*. *Jantelagen* also typically requires the concealment of privilege. One Swedish anthropologist friend of mine had grown up in an “upper-class” neighborhood where her father was a schoolteacher, but, like many of her childhood neighbors, she resists speaking in a way that reveals it. Her elite manner of speaking returns only involuntarily, when she is feeling nervous or self-conscious.

Below the king in the *de facto* social hierarchy of Sweden are the aristocratic families, which nowadays send their scions to overseas business schools, such that they have transformed their hereditary privileges and contacts into an international array of board memberships and stockholdings. Hence, most people cannot tell where this elite’s wealth comes from. Moreover, the aristocrats keep a very low profile, in places little known to the usual watchers of the Stureplan people, such as Danderyd, Stocksund, and Djursholm. Next in the Swedish social hierarchy are the stably-employed members of the liberal professions and, then, unionized, skilled laborers.

Swedish royalty, the aristocratic business class, the successful members of the liberal professions, and immigrants seem to keep their distance from electoral politics. So, among the upper classes, it is chiefly the university dropouts and failures at the liberal professions who actually run for political office. During elections, they compete with the

leaders of the labor unions for control over the government. Thus, in twentieth- to twenty-first-century Swedish politics, the prime minister-ship has switched back and forth between labor leaders and the failed scions of the upper class.

Below the unionized labor class is what another Swedish anthropologist friend calls, after our current disciplinary argot, the “precarariat”—the low-skill or small-town workers who cannot count on constant employment. Among these are the increasingly resented migrants in Sweden—known *pars pro toto* as “refugees”—who are accused by the indigenous precariat of leeching undeserved resources through the social welfare system. Many of the immigrants are, in fact, highly skilled but are unable to translate their talents into the local job market because of a lack of fluency in Swedish or because of racial discrimination. Roma, Finns, Saami, Muslims, and dark-skinned immigrants are constantly available as antitypes of the legitimate Swede, who is seen as the sole legitimate beneficiary of the social welfare system.

Swedes, too, were once poor, and, during the nineteenth century, one-third of the country’s population fled for a better life in the United States. However, eighty years of social democracy, conceded by the royal house in order to avoid the fate suffered by the czars, has caused most Swedes to forget their responsibility to people who now suffer what many of them once suffered—economic exile from an impoverished homeland. Swedes’ most frequently vocalized debt is not to the refugees in their midst but to the U.S. victors of World War II, by whose grace alone, according to one Nybrogatan retailer of English-style men’s clothing, the Swedes are not speaking Russian today. Consequently, even the reputedly snobbiest Swedes seemed willing to speak to me with unguarded openness and warmth about Stureplan people. Hence, Swedes of color and my anthropologist colleagues reminded me to maintain my American accent as I pursued my new passion, since an insider to Swedish society—and especially a native Swede of African descent—would not have received such a generous response.

During last September’s national elections, while the Swedish news media focused on the refugee question, the main social antitype I heard about as I circulated through the restaurants, bars, nightclubs, and shops of both the elite Östermalm and the artsy-but-gentrifying Södermalm neighborhoods were the Stureplan people. They give a face to the “matter out of place” that is the hyper-conspicuous, moneyed elite—a group that is not supposed to exist in egalitarian Swedish society. However,

Roma, Finns, Saami, Muslims, and dark-skinned immigrants are constantly available as anti-types of the legitimate Swede, who is seen as the sole legitimate beneficiary of the social welfare system.



**Untitled
Anxious
Man.** White
ceramic tile,
black soap, wax,
spray enamel.
245.1 × 184.2 ×
6.4 cm. © 2014
Rashid Johnson.
Courtesy the
artist and Hauser
& Wirth.

they are not alone in this space of monstrous otherness. They are the ultimate point in an infinite regress of reputedly elitist others defining what Sweden hates about itself. When I spoke to Stockholmers born in the “north” of Sweden—which often actually refers to the upper reaches of the southern half of the country, where the sun still sets in the summer and still rises in the winter—many of these newer arrivals to the city reported having once hated Stockholmers. When visiting the north with their Stockholmer friends, they still witnessed the cold shoulder given to the Stockholmer. One northern-origin woman told

me of introducing a visitor from Stockholm to friends in her northern town. But these friends were friendly only until they found out where the visitor came from. As soon as they heard "Stockholm," they abruptly stopped talking to her. This rock-hard wall of exclusion was enough to make the visitor weep.

There are also forms of social exclusion among white Swedes more subtle than the hatred of the Stockholmer. For example, the nation sees itself and is seen by outsiders as blond. But the truth is that many, if not most, Swedes are dark-haired and dark-eyed. One swarthy female companion of mine at East and Laroy is the manager of a major American-owned Stureplan clothier. She says that other Swedes regularly ask her what country she comes from. Sweden seems intent on bleaching its dark roots. In a further example, it is seldom mentioned that Fredrik Reinfeldt, the last Swedish prime minister and a conservative, had a dark skinned African American great-great-grandfather.

The forms of alienation suffered by other Swedes are less subtle. According to the Swedes of African descent who talked to me, many of their countrymen tell demeaning jokes about Finns, speak as though all Roma are criminals or beggars, and casually employ the word *neger*, which white Swedes tend to say is neutral but which many African-descended Swedes regard as equivalent to "nigger." A few years ago, having lost her wallet during reggae night at Sturecompagniet, the Swedish daughter of a Caribbean father and a white Swedish mother called the next day to see if it had been found. Her perfect Swedish persuaded the telephone attendant at this prima Stureplan nightclub that she would share his vision of who does and does not belong in the national community. The staff person said he could not find the wallet and asked rhetorically, "Well, what do you expect with one hundred tall *negrer* in the building last night?!"

It was not in Östermalm but in Södermalm's funky Sidetrack bar that I first learned of Stureplan people. And I ruined a perfectly pleasant conversation by mentioning the sartorially and physically graceful people who had walked past or lunched beside me at the Strandvägen Restaurant on the Östermalm waterfront. I thought that my drinking partner would receive my gushing words as a compliment to all Swedes, since, until then, I remained oblivious to the full breadth of the differences of region, dialect, neighborhood, and class that afflict white, non-immigrant Swedes. I was even blinder to the depth of feeling about these differences among middle and working class white Swedes. Like a

Sweden seems intent on bleaching its dark roots. It is seldom mentioned that the last Swedish prime minister and a conservative, had a dark skinned African American great-great-grandfather.

y are the
defining
ers born
ie upper
ill sets in
r arrivals
1 visiting
the cold
man told

judge pounding his gavel, my drinking companion in this Södermalm basement pub immediately identified the objects of my admiration as “Stureplan people.” He gritted his teeth as he proceeded to mock their clothes and their accents—which, he added, in case I had missed it, he hated. He explained twice that his and his companion’s dialect comes

**The staff person said
he could not find
the wallet and asked
rhetorically, “Well, what
do you expect with one
hundred tall negrer in
the building last night?!”**

from a university town south of Stockholm and insisted that it is therefore *not* inferior to the Stureplan accent. He admitted that some people change their accents when they come to Stockholm, but he had refused.

Thereafter, I heard a dozen variations on this theme. People from regions distant from Stockholm voiced their resentment of Stockholmers as a whole and of their

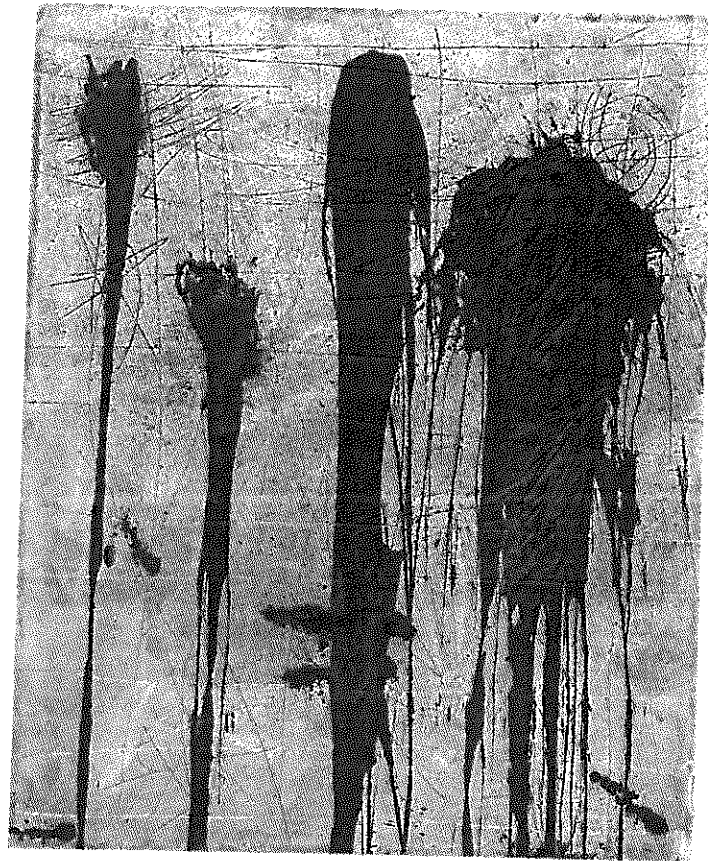
speech patterns. People in funky Södermalm expressed resentment of people from the elite Östermalm neighborhood and, within it, Stureplan Square. Yet some people in Stureplan avowed that the notion of Stureplan people is just a myth, that there are all sorts of people nowadays in Stureplan, since most of the residents, like most Stockholmers, came from elsewhere. However, the staff at the high-end Östermalm men’s boutique La Chemise knew the referents of this term well. One son of the owner was, to my eye, an elegantly dressed and perfectly coiffed exemplar of the style that others identify as “Stureplan.” Her desire thinly veiled, his female co-worker justifiably observed aloud that he looks like a model. As a child, Mr. Clothes-Horse said, he had attended the Östermalm public school, before many of the area’s wealthy people chose to send their children to private schools, but he was unwilling to remain with them in the same high school. “Too snobby,” he summarized. I could not tell whether he continued to re-fold clothes out of necessity or because he did not want me to see the emotion in his eyes. Others later reported to me the sort of cruelty that he might have been fleeing in the Östermalm school. Multiple instances of violent hazing have been reported in the boarding schools that the children of such elites now attend. For example, in 2013, nine older students at one of Sweden’s three most elite boarding schools burned two younger students with a hot iron, resulting in the temporary closure of the school by the state school board and changes in the rules governing such boarding schools nationwide. For non-elites gazing upward into the world of the Stureplan people, these tales furnish proof of their monstrous otherness.

Like Ms. Platinum, Mr. Clothes-Horse offers proof that groups seen by others as internally homogeneous often aggressively stratify their own, as sociologist Erving Goffman put it. By extension of this lesson,

dermalm
iration as
ock their
sed it, he
ct comes
ockholm
ot inferi-
admitted
accents
t he had

ariations
s distant
entment
of their
ment of
t, Sture-
otion of
le nowa-
olmers,
ermalm
ell. One
erfectly
Her de-
that he
tended
people
willing
re sum-
nes out
1 in his
ht have
violent
ildren
ents at
young-
of the
erning
d into
f their

s seen
7 their
esson,



If It's Magic.
Bronze panel,
black soap, wax.
124.8 × 99.4 ×
1.3 cm. © 2014
Rashid Johnson.
Courtesy the
artist and Hauser
& Wirth.

even the most obvious exemplars of elite groups suffer uncertainty about the extent and validity of their belonging.

From his own elevated but precarious rung, Mr. Clothes-Horse further deconstructed my layman's image of Stureplan people. He identified the common stereotypes about their dress as the fashions that his high-end customers and former schoolmates have already abandoned to the rubes. Professionally more up-to-date than the average observer, he says that Stureplan style is now no different from what people are wearing in Knightsbridge and the Upper East Side. Much of its inspiration is Italian. Mr. Södermalm Basement-Pub, however, objected to my reading that Stureplan style looks English, insisting, with an ironic degree of nationalistic pride, that Stureplan style is distinctly

Swedish. Period. The true Stureplan person is thus a blank screen for the self-imagining of Swedes, and he or she looks different from every Swedish perspective.

I should say that I mean my new acquaintances no harm with my nicknames for them. I am actually quite fond of Ms. Platinum and have kept in touch with Mr. Clothes-Horse, who, having read a draft of this essay, continued to provide valuable information and insights. After the anthropological ethic, these sobriquets are intended to protect the confidentiality of my new friends, but they also underline the point that evanescent images of the ideal or hated other are among the anchors of communal identities. Of course, there is hardly anyone who looks so simple from up close or who cannot plausibly shift the role of social anchor—whether paragon or antitype—onto a still-more-distant Other.

In Vau de Ville Bar/Restaurant on Nybro Street, I met a rugged-faced and perfectly-coiffed Södernmalm-dwelling realtor who sells property in Stureplan. He dated the gorgeous Zambian *maitresse d'*, but I doubted that her weave had been what impressed him. I interrupted my beer confab with a young South African-Swedish anthropologist because my Stureplan people radar had picked up his Stureplan-perfect hair and brushed-wool skinny suit. Plus, we were connected through Ms. Weave, whom I had vocally admired the previous night. He could see why he was worth the interruption, but he insisted that he dressed that way for entirely professional reasons. Like many other denizens of Stureplan Square, he felt happier in Södernmalm, and that's where he wanted to show me the clubs. Yet he had an investment in exonerating Stureplan. He denied that *vaska*, such as the potlatch-like disposal of champagne and hamburgers, really happens. He admitted that *some* people in Stureplan engage in *stekare*, showing off, but certainly not most. Other service people in Stureplan spoke with equal moderation, making intra-Stureplan distinctions of little concern to outsiders. Bartenders and *maitres d's*, male and female, told me that they like Stureplan people, but several described the young people of this class as the "brats," which is apparently the standard and somewhat affectionate parlance.

The brats I talked to confessed that some of their peers are superficial, and many said that they prefer the bars and clubs in Södernmalm, where they feel more "relaxed." But the brats, such as the Eritrean young lady I met on my side of the counter at the Stureplan Urban Outfitters, are also fluent in the hours and the status hierarchy among the bars and clubs around their home turf—which nightclubs reject the highest proportion of aspirants to entry, which ones are too easy to get into, and which ones constitute the smallest downward step when one is turned away from a more attractive door.

Like Ms. Platinum from East Bar, my anthropologist colleagues emphasize that not all of the brats really have money. Nor do they all

reen for
om every

with my
nd have
ft of this
ts. After
tect the
oint that
anchors
io looks
of social
t Other.
ed-faced
perty in
oubted
ny beer
ause my
air and
Weave,
why he
way for
replan
nted to
replan.
paigne
ople in
Other
ing in-
ers and
eople,
' which

uperfi-
malm,
ritrean
Urban
among
reject
easy to
when

agues
ey all

ion 118

possess the normative skin color, Miss Eritrea being a case in point. Some of the brats are service workers who—whether they are Swedish-born or immigrant—spend a high proportion of their earnings on the clothing, admissions charges, and drinks that one needs to make a respectable appearance on the Stureplan. Such brats of limited means may, indeed, account for a large proportion of the “Stureplan people.” They dramatize the Swedish open secret that opportunity depends on contacts and, in the absence of contacts, the appearance of elite connections. And such useful contacts and appearances may be precisely what many of the brats are looking for. Even the middle-class majority of Stockholm seems aware that major economic enterprise in Sweden is the monopoly of the well-connected, aristocratic elite. So *stekare*—the performance and the appearance of inclusion in exclusive circles—is for its performers and its critical observers alike both economic and psychological magic.

But another class of Swedes seethes about the precariousness of the benefits they derive from the system. The white precariat, which tends to dwell in the country’s deindustrialized and rural regions, increasingly blames the immigrants and refugees, as well as the people in charge in Stockholm. Hence, the recent 13% vote for the anti-immigrant Sweden Democrats Party. On the other hand, the central Asian, northeast African, and Caribbean male immigrant precariat blames white Swedish racism for the fact that they work hard every day and yet never prosper. The entire Swedish precariat murmurs non-stop about the effects of their social non-inclusion, be it rooted in region and dialect or race.

No one I met called him or herself a “true” Stureplan person. Rather, everyone eligible for the title detailed how he or she fell short of the privileges or the evils associated with this paradigmatic other at the top of the social ladder. As they parroted others’ critiques of Stureplan, they also seemed torn between their desire to get in and their resentment of not getting in, between Swedish society’s egalitarian ideals and the desire for access to an inner circle of inclusion and opportunity that is always receding just beyond their vision and reach. By the time the regional and the racial Others have learned to *steka*, or show off, like “true Stureplan people,” the “true Stureplan people” seem to have moved on to a less accessible way to *steka*. You can never pin down the goal, and no one even really knows who the true Stureplan people are or by what manners or mannerisms they can truly be distinguished. Stureplan people are an admired and hated—but always protean—chimera of everyone’s disappointed aspirations. Their most concrete

**Stureplan people are
an admired and hated—
but always protean—
chimera of everyone’s
disappointed aspirations.**

reality as a class is that they spare the black and brown “refugees” their otherwise Christ-like burden as the *lone* scapegoat of Swedish national anxiety in a globalizing age.

In the 2014 elections, a Left-wing bloc led by the Social Democrats defeated the Center-Right government, but the anti-immigrant and reportedly racist Sweden Democrats Party celebrated huge gains—from 5.7% of the electorate in the 2010 elections to 12.9% in 2014. They are now a party to be reckoned with, and the self-identified Afro-Swedes I met are devastated. Immigrants and refugees, and especially those identified by their dark skin, are now the chief symbols of Swedes’ disappointment with northern Europeans’ gradual loss of economic security amid globalization. They are falsely blamed for sapping the strength of the welfare state. But the Stureplan people are a much more complex and, at least in the capital, omnipresent symbol. They

The notion of Europe as the super-human ideal of humanity has long been the symbolic linchpin of white supremacy in the Americas.

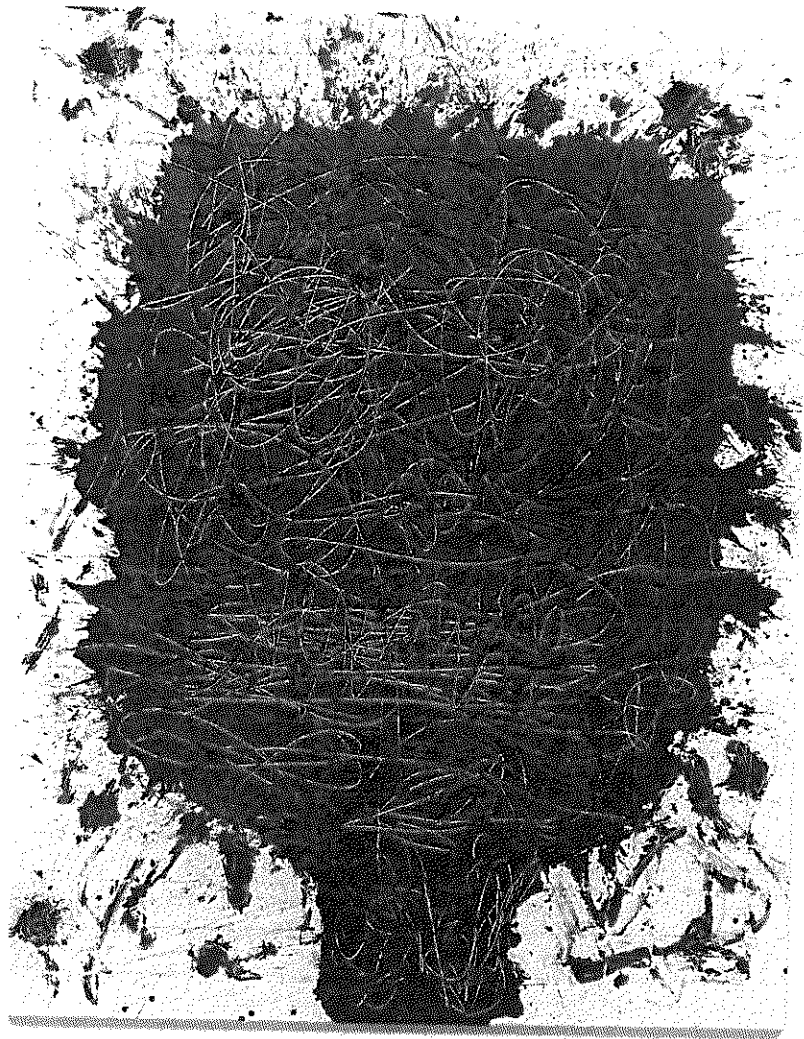
are a further hated anti-symbol of what is nostalgically regarded as an economically secure and egalitarian past, which, in fact, always included a great inequality of opportunity and esteem across the diverse white-skinned regions and ethnic groups of Sweden. The run-on ire that I heard in the description of Stureplan people reveals, but resists confessing, its jealousy or ambivalence. The most vociferous critics also regularly confess to having a beloved son, a daughter, a younger brother, or a nephew who desperately wants to join the Stureplan crowd. Hence, Stureplan people are also symbols of an adaptation that many Swedes must fear they will have to undergo as industry flees overseas, and ideas and images become Sweden’s only profitable commodities.

All of this came as a great surprise to me, because the idea of Sweden, and of Europe in general, tends to serve two overarching rhetorical functions in the United States. First, Europe—now imaginatively contracted to just those allegedly blond and blue-eyed European precincts of Germanic-speakers, since the real-world failures of Italy, Greece, Portugal, France, and Ireland have become too obvious to ignore—tends to be treated as one great cultured and sophisticated aristocracy. The notion of Europe as the super-human ideal of humanity has long been the symbolic linchpin of white supremacy in the Americas. According to this political mythology, it cannot be admitted that Europe is troubled by internal, intra-white hierarchies that undermine the premise that all Europeans are by definition superior. Even the European Union’s greatest economic success story, Germany, is crisscrossed with inter-regional hierarchies and hereditary intra-racial resentments. For example, the accent of the Saxons is regarded as stupid-sounding, and

gees" their
h national

Democrats
grant and
ns—from
. They are
to-Swedes
ally those
f Swedes'
economic
ping the
a much
ool. They
f what is
omically
s, in fact,
y of op-
diverse
roups of
d in the
reveals,
or am-
having
desper-
ople are
will have
become

of Swe-
etorical
ly con-
ecincts
ce, Por-
—tends
y. The
g been
ording
s trou-
prem-
opean
d with
ts. For
g, and



**Untitled
Anxious
Man.** White
ceramic tile,
black soap, wax,
spray enamel.
245.1 × 184.2 ×
6.4 cm. © 2014
Rashid Johnson.
Courtesy the
artist and Hauser
& Wirth.

Swebi-
ans feel such a powerful mix of shame and defensive pride about
their accents that their state, Baden-Württemberg, is not content with
its extraordinary economic success. The government of this once-rural,
culturally provincial, and still linguistically marginalized state runs a
whole television and internet campaign touting, *Wir können alles, außer
Hochdeutsch*—"We can do anything, but speak high German." While
some Germans regard this slogan as a sign of Swebian arrogance, such
bragging, especially among over-achievers, normally compensates for
self-doubt.

Second, the Left in the United States uses Scandinavia rhetorically as proof that social democracy can work, and that universal fairness and social equality are feasible alternatives to the ruthlessness of the free-market, no-safety-net capitalism demanded by our Republicans. Conversely, I heard members of the Swedish Right offer unbalanced portraits of the United States' "free-market capitalism" and its alleged miracles to advocate rightward political change in Sweden. For example, on the way from a Sunday-night Södermalm boat party, a Swedish law student lamented the failures of social democracy in Sweden. He observed that Sweden constantly borrows the United States' medical technology and invents none of its own, because the Swedish state counterproductively *subsidizes* medical research, rather than leaving this matter to free enterprise, as he presupposed the United States does. He was surprised to hear from me that virtually all of the basic scientific research at the root of new commercial products in the United States is conducted at our universities and under contract with the United States government. Moreover, the federally-funded NASA program generated an extraordinary array of the commercially profitable technologies that defined the late twentieth century. And the internet, the greatest vehicle of new enterprise today, was a product of United States defense spending. Private enterprise in the United States—including the medical industry—benefits enormously and indispensably from federal government spending.

Hence, the idea of the "Stureplan people" also reminds me that the images of foreign lands and of local Others invoked in national political debates are always oversimplified—no less in the United States than in Sweden. Not only in political debates, but also in the way people conceive of their most fundamental cultural and personal identities, the ideal and the antitype are always "over there"—in some other country, region, class, race, hair color, or ethnic group. But the closer you get to the imagined exemplar of the best or of the worst, the more it recedes from actual empirical view. Like "Stureplan people," the Other is always more complex, varied, ambiguous and ambivalent than he or she seems from afar. In fact, the Other is almost always a black hole around whose gravitational pull and repulsiveness every society orbits. ☉

His Excellency
President Issoufou
Mahamadou

Boko Haram has no future. Boko Haram will be defeated. The Multinational Joint Task Force, which is having more and more success in the fight against this criminal organization, shows that it is through more international cooperation that we will see the end of terrorism. . . . In order to eradicate it for the long term, we must eliminate the breeding ground which encourages its development: poverty. In Niger, we are aware of the close link which exists between security and development.

Bénédicte Boisseron

Cyno-racial assimilation is a trend that did not end with the abolition of slavery. Civil rights rioters in the 1960s American South were subject to terrorization and attack by police dogs, just as during slavery blacks were hunted by dogs. What brings the dog, the slave, and the civil rights protestor together under the same stigma of 'ferocity' is their common claim for freedom, perceived ultimately as a feral claim.

J. Lorand Matory

Immigrants and refugees, and especially those identified by their dark skin, are now the chief symbols of Swedes' disappointment with northern Europeans' gradual loss of economic security amid globalization. But the Stureplan people are . . . a further hated anti-symbol of what is nostalgically regarded as an economically secure and egalitarian past, which, in fact, always included a great inequality of opportunity and esteem across the diverse white-skinned regions and ethnic groups of Sweden.

Kaitlyn Greenidge

Looking at him, at his bony knees pressed up against the underside of the wood desk, at his oversized hands with the nails bit down to the faintly bloody bed, he didn't seem like anyone's secret lover. That rumor about him and Julia Toneybee-Leroy had to be wrong. How could an heiress fall in love with this wisp, with his thinning hair and dirty shirt collar? Did we honestly believe she would import a population of apes as a noisy cover to allow her to conjugate with Dr. Gardner in peace?

Karen D. Taylor

Since I had children, knowing full well that I birthed them into hostile territory, I had to make sure that they would love themselves and our people. I had to preemptively destroy the horrendous messages that they would hear about us, themselves, their ancestors. I've heard that children believe everything their mothers tell them about themselves, so my words had to be even stronger than love. My words would have to sustain my sons forever.



INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS
OFFICE OF SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING

Issue 118/2015

CONTENTS

- I Address to the African Development Conference**
His Excellency President Issoufou Mahamadou of Niger draws lessons from history in describing his vision for the Renaissance Program for Niger and for "the renaissance of the continent"
- 13 An Airing** · Poetry
Prison Cell
by Abdellatif Laâbi, translated by André Naffis-Sahely
- 15 Afro-Dog**
Bénédicte Boisseron looks at black America's historical interaction with dogs—from slavery to the current Black Lives Matter protests—and provides a prism through which racial perception, notions of inherent goodness or badness, and the law can be further investigated
- 32 The Bug Chaser** · Poetry
by Tommye Blount
- 33 A Tenderer Blessing** · Fiction
by Otosirieze Obi-Young
- 47 Stureplan People**
A visit to Sweden during the parliamentary elections offers anthropologist J. Lorand Matory an unexpected glimpse into a subculture that reveals the nation's complex relationship with Otherhood
- 61 Nymphadora of Spring City, 1929** · Fiction
by Kaitlyn Greenidge
- 74 Rotimi Fani-Kayode's Ecstatic Antibodies**
Evan Moffitt explores the fusion of traditional Yoruba and baroque iconography in the powerfully political and sensual portraiture of the Nigerian photographer
- 87 Tin Prophets** · Hybrid Poetry
by Gary Jackson and David Willet
- 88 Shazam** · Poetry
Tryouts
by Gary Jackson
- 90 This Time It Will Be All Right** · Fiction
by Irehobhude O. Iyioha
- 102 Ark** · Poetry
by Robin Coste Lewis
- 136 Lake Kivu Dream** · Poetry
by Aaron Brown
- 138 Gastronomy** · Fiction
by TJ Benson
- 144 Still Occupied**
In an era of continued violence against black people, New York City resident Karen D. Taylor wrestles the spirits, speaks sustaining words, and conjures force fields to keep her black sons alive and safe
- 155 Paranormal Womb** · Poetry
by Chris Morris

Cover: Prototype / Phenotype. Archival pigment print. 100 × 116 cm. ©2013 Ayana V. Jackson. Image courtesy of the artist and Mariane Ibrahim Gallery. Title from Gary Jackson's poem *Shazam*.