

Introduction

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Born in 1969 in Malmö, Sweden, Lukas Moodysson is best known in the English-speaking world as a film director whose career has oscillated between raw, poignant portraits of society's outsiders on the one hand, and unfathomably avant-garde explorations of sexuality on the other. Moodysson's latest film to date, *Vi är Bäst!* (*We are the Best!*, 2013) has been received as a return to the form and focus of his earliest feature films in its affectionately detailed portrait of a recent era, in this case the Stockholm punk scene of the early 1980s (Yde 2014). Like *Fucking Åmal* (*Show Me Love*, 1998) and *Tillsammans* (*Together*, 2000), *We are the Best!* both indulges and interrogates the viewer's nostalgia by dissecting the social relations intrinsic to the era portrayed – and often revealing that those same inequalities linger on in our own time.

An interest in the social mechanics of exclusion and loneliness is in evidence from the very start of Moodysson's directorial career. Of the three short films which preceded his first feature, his 1997 short *Bara Prata Lite* (*Talk*) is striking in its foreshadowing of his commitment to rendering forgotten lives visible. In *Bara Prata Lite*, a recently-retired man haunts his former workplace, to the annoyance of his colleagues, and tries desperately to persuade strangers to talk to him, whether on the bus or over the telephone. When a young female missionary calls on him at home, his desire to 'just talk a little' is revealed to be rather less innocent than expected. This subtle and disturbing short film succeeds in exposing the dynamics of social marginalisation while also dissecting the nuances of gendered power relations. As the articles in this theme issue show, Moodysson has repeatedly returned to a similar set of concerns in his filmmaking. While *Lilya-4Ever* (2002) and *Ett hål i mitt hjärta* (*A Hole in My Heart*, 2004) are uncompromising in their scrutiny of sexual relations as the arena where asymmetries of

power are played out, *Show Me Love*, *Together*, *Mammoth*, and *We are the Best!* provide a less visceral, but no less powerful, account of the mechanics of inequality – and of self-actualisation.

However, Lukas Moodysson is more than a film director. As a writer, he has crafted screenplays for his own films as well as scripts for television: *Det nya land* (*The New Land*, dir. Geir Hansteen Jörgensen, 2000), a drama following two refugees encountering the Swedish summer, and *Terrorister – En film om dom dömda* (*Terrorists – The Kids they Sentenced*, 2003), a documentary on the anti-globalisation protests in Gothenburg, which Moodysson wrote and directed with Stefan Jarl. Beyond the cinema and television screens, his record as a poet stretches back to his late teens: at the age of seventeen, he published the collection *Det spelar ingen roll var blixterna slår ner* (roughly: 'It doesn't matter where the lightning hits', 1987), and has since produced almost a dozen books of poetry and prose (Atrium Forlag, n.d.), including a collaboration with his wife Coco Moodysson on an illustrated serial, *Vårdcentralen Fontanellen* (Fontanelle Health Centre, 2005). This anticipated the later collaboration between the couple on *We are the Best!*, which was based on Coco Moodysson's cartoon series *Aldrig Godnatt* (Never Goodnight) (Yde 2014). In the case of *Container* (published 2009), a prose poem constituted of fragments of conversations, letters, and political and pop culture references forms the basis for Moodysson's film of the same name (released 2006). Here, grainy images of sexual confusion, detritus, obsolete technology and urban isolation supplement Jena Malone's recitation of the prose poem, which is conceived as a dialogue between two sides of the speaker's psyche (Gentele 2006). The intermedial nature of the *Container* project was further complicated by a 2006 exhibition at Stockholm's Färgfabriken, in which the chaotic, abject conceptual space in which the film takes place was (re)constructed. In recognition of the central importance of poetry to Moodysson's career, this issue of *Scandinavica* is rounded off with an extract from Moodysson's prose poem *Vad gör jag här* (*What am I Doing Here*), translated by Kjerstin Moody and contextualised in an article by the translator. A full translation of the poem will be published in e-book form by Norvik Press next year. We are very grateful to Lukas

Moodysson for his support for this translation project.

In recent years, academic interest in Moodysson's films has started to flourish, not least in the form of Anna Westerståhl Stenport's 2012 monograph *Lukas Moodysson's Show Me Love*, for University of Washington Press Nordic Film Classics series. Within the confines of a journal theme issue, it is not feasible to offer a comprehensive or exhaustive treatment of Moodysson's still-expanding repertoire. Rather, what we aim to provide here is a collection of articles which can stimulate debate on, in particular, the ethics and politics of Moodysson's *oeuvre*, focusing both on some of his better-known films, and on a selection of his less well-known outputs, including his poetry.

References

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