Minority in a Minor Role
- Black Representation in Twenty-first Century Swedish Film
Abstract

This essay aims to study black representation in twenty-first century Swedish film through the analysis of five films produced in or coproduced in Sweden. To study this subject, theories that discuss different aspects of black representation and whiteness are used in order to provide such a deep understanding of the research problem as possible. Primarily theories by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, Hynek Pallas and Richard Dyer are used. The result of the study shows that black people play a marginal role and that all the films analyzed use discriminatory discourses towards blacks.

In all the films studied, the protagonists are white. The black characters also appear less often than the white ones, in the same time as they are not granted subjectivity as often. Four out of the five films studied also reproduce the Uncle Tom stereotype. The African Swedish characters are also passive while the white characters are the ones who undertake actions that propel the plot. The African Swedish characters’ primary purpose consists of assisting the white characters and to exist only in relation to them, something that creates an unequal power relationship between them.

Keywords: Black Representation, Blacks, Ethnicity, Race, Swedish Film, Afro-Swedes, Blackness, Whiteness, Black Representation in film
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1. Introduction

The common perception of Sweden is that of an antiimperialist and politically neutral Welfare state that shows solidarity with the Third World (Wigerfelt & Wigerfelt & Kiiskinen 2014, p. 2; Mc Eachrane & Faye 2001, p. 9). This image has constructed a theory that denies the fact that there are racial structures in the Swedish society and that a person’s skin color and ethnical background matters. In fact, the definition of what it means to be Swedish depends on a person’s appearance. This is however something that most Swedes are reluctant to acknowledge, which makes it hard to discuss the existence of racism and how the structures of racism infect people’s everyday lives (Wigerfelt & Wigerfelt & Kiiskinen 2014, p. 2).

Sweden is not the only country in Europe to assume an idea about color-blindness. Color-blindness means to deny the fact that a person’s skin color actually matters and that it does have an impact on people’s lives and possibilities (Wigerfelt & Wigerfelt & Kiiskinen 2014, p. 2). In reality, racism operates as a set of power structures that separate people and exclude certain people from participation in society. People’s actions are, thus, based on racist discourses and dictate people’s possibilities. Racist discourses thus also fill practical functions (Matsson 2001, p. 260f.).

In 2012 the two Swedish films Play (Ruben Östlund, 2011) and Liten Skär och alla små brokiga (Little Pink and all the Motley Little Ones, Stina Wirsén, 2012) caused debates due to their depiction of black people (Karlsson 2014, p. 43f.; Sawyer & Habel 2014, p. 4). In the case of Little Pink and all the Motley Little Ones (2012), the protests were directed at the character Lilla Hjärtat (Little Heart) because she was believed to represent blacks in a negative light (Sawyer & Habel 2014, p. 4).

Films are not only to be seen as representations, but also as statements (Shohat & Stam 1997, p. 180). Filmmakers use certain discourses, which makes it possible for the spectator to see their films as depictions of real-life. Films also make statements about culture and social life. When a person from a minority group is represented in a film, the film automatically makes claims about that group, even when it is understood that the film is fictional (Shohat & Stam 1997, p. 179). Films often reflect the society in which they are produced, and the stories that are told therefore usually describe the dominant society, which is believed to represent the nation’s unity (Pallas 2011, p. 38).

As these studies make plain, there is anti-black racism in the Swedish society and therefore it is possible that this is represented in Swedish film as well, since films have a tendency to reflect the ideologies that are used in society. This is also suggested by the criticism towards
Play (2011) and Liten skär och alla små brokiga (2012), something that also motivates the importance of studying black representation in Swedish films produced in the twenty-first century. As Shohat and Stam argue, cinema makes statements about minority groups (1997, p. 179). Therefore, it is relevant to study Swedish film from this perspective to see how black people are represented in this cultural form.

1.1. Background

Contrary to what most Swedes believe, Sweden did take part in imperialism and had colonies in for example Ghana and Saint Bartholomé. The few people that actually acknowledge that Sweden played a part in colonialism and the slave trade often underestimate and trivialize it (Habel 2008, p. 261).

As a matter of fact, anti-black racism in contemporary Sweden stems from the country’s role in slavery and colonialism. It also has to do with the racial hierarchies that were produced, both scientifically and culturally. During slavery, many Africans were brought to Sweden as for example servants (Hübinette & Beshir & Kawesa 2014, p. 12; p. 21).

In the 1920s, the Swedish documentary films were the kinds of film that were most popular. The African peoples that were depicted in these films were only there to shock and amaze the Swedish audience and not to provide them with an understanding of African peoples and their culture. These documentaries were also shown in Swedish schools because they were believed to be scientifically accurate (Gustafsson 2008, p. 37).

One example of these documentaries is Bland vildar och vilda djur (Among Savages and Wild Beasts, Oscar Olsson, 1921). This film gives examples of Sweden’s attitudes towards Africans by claiming that the difference between being an animal and a so-called “savage” is only about different degrees. Therefore, the white Swedish men were supposed to be able to bring knowledge to the “uncivilized” Africa (Gustafsson 2008, p. 37f.).

Among Savages and Wild Beasts (1921) focuses on portraying different African tribes. In the beginning of the film, the Kikuju men are compared to apes by the intercutting of a black man climbing a tree and a baboon climbing a tree (Gustafsson 2008, p. 38).

Another documentary was Med Prins William på afrikanska jaktstigar (On African Hunting Grounds with Prince William, Oscar Olsson, 1922). Prince William and his crew were in Africa to collect plants and animals to bring home to Sweden for scientific study. However, the main purpose was to kill several mountain gorillas. The purpose of the journey
was thus to exploit Africa. Just like *Among Savages and Wild Beasts* (1921), this film also compares black people to apes (Gustafsson 2008, p. 38f.).

The cannibal stereotype did not occur in Swedish-produced documentaries during the silent film era. Instead, these documentaries were imported from other countries. An example is *Shipwrecked among Cannibals* (William F. Adler, USA, 1920). The cannibal stereotype was however used in Swedish feature films, like *Robinson i skärgården* (*Robinson in the Archipelago*, Rune Carlsten, 1920). This film includes an animated sequence where protagonist Agathon dreams that he has been stranded on a deserted island, just like Robinson Crusoe. He becomes hunted and captured by the islanders who start preparations to cook him (Gustafsson 2008, p. 41).

The purpose of representing Blacks as cannibals was another way of coding Africans as primitive in comparison to the “civil” Western World. In the same time, it served the purpose of comparing black people to animals (Gustafsson 2008, p. 41).

From the end of the 19th century, Africans were exhibited as attractions in amusement parks, like Gröna Lund. In Swedish media, for example in film, blacks were depicted as childish and as primitive savages (Hübinette & Beshir & Kawesa 2014, p. 21).

When Africa started to be decolonized in the 1960s, Sweden began to change its attitudes towards black people. The Civil Rights Movement, Antiapartheid Movement and the formation of a postcolonial state in the 1970s and 1980s, all contributed to Sweden’s new way of seeing blacks (Hübinette & Beshir & Kawesa 2014, p. 21f.). This new attitude could also be found in Swedish films. When colonialism was coming to an end, many Swedish filmmakers started to criticize the colonial structures of their nation. An example of this is the documentary *Vita myror* (*White Ants*, Bo Bjelfvenstam, 1969), which portrays Swedes in East Africa and reveals how they still regard themselves as rulers over the African continent (Habel 2008, p. 262f.). However, even though Sweden’s attitudes towards black people had started to change, the country still preserved parts of its colonial structure. This manifested itself through different negative common perceptions of people of African descent. These perceptions could take the form of seeing African Swedes as sexual objects and as exotic people (Hübinette & Beshir & Kawesa 2014, p. 22).

The negative representations of African Swedes can still be found in Swedish culture, ranging from children’s culture to sports journalism. It also manifests itself in Swedes’ recurring use of the n-word. Another contributing factor to why Swedish culture still reproduces black stereotypes is that there are not many black people working within these fields (Hübinette & Beshir & Kawesa 2014, p. 22).
The definition of blackness and whiteness also stems from race biology, which was founded in the 19th century (Mc Eachrane & Faye 2001, p. 12). Sweden was also the first country in the world to found an institute for race biology in 1921. The work at this institute became the foundation for the modern racist ideology that Sweden adopted, in the same time as it influenced filmmakers. Swedish films reproduced these racist ideologies and made it normal and popular to represent certain minority groups as the other (Gustafsson 2008, p. 37). Some of the negative perceptions of blacks in Swedish society as well as in film were also imported from American films. An example of this is *Birth of a Nation* (D.W. Griffith, USA, 1915), a film that became very popular in Sweden (Gustafsson 2008, p. 36f.).

As far as race biology is concerned, it still has an impact on how blacks are perceived in Sweden. Race biology ascribed certain qualities to black people and white people respectively. Today this manifests itself in describing white people as normal, intelligent, rational and civil, while non-whites are assumed to lack these qualities. Therefore, they are seen as deviant. To be a human is seen as an equivalence to being white and has also lead to an exclusion of black people in the writing of history (Mc Eachrane & Faye 2001, p. 12f.).

1.2. Aim

The aim of this essay is to study black representation in Swedish twenty-first century Swedish film. This aim can with advantage be broken down into the following questions:

- How much space do the black characters occupy compared to the white ones?
- How are the black characters portrayed compared to the whites?
- Which characters are granted subjectivity (point-of-view perspective) and how does this manifest itself?
- What are the relationships between the black characters and the white ones?

1.3. Delimitations

This essay is limited to the study of black representation and thus the representation of other minority groups will not be taken into consideration in this study. The analysis will not be intersectional, i.e. only the characters’ ethnical background will be taken into consideration and not other factors like for example class, age and gender.

Audience reception and comments from producers, directors or critics, for example interviews, debate articles, blogs, etc. will not be studied in this essay, nor is the purpose to
perform auteur studies, since the aim of this analysis is not to examine the films of a specific director.

This study is limited to live-action film only and thus animated films will not be examined. Even though the primary target of this analysis is not to study Swedish films from a specific genre, genre conventions will still be taken into consideration since they can have an impact on character portrayal and narrative.

It is beyond the purpose of this study to discuss whether the black characters are presented in a realistic way or not. This is the most common way of discussing black representation among audiences and critics. However, this approach is too generalizing to be useful in studies about black representation since debates about realism reduce black people to a homogenous group instead of being unique individuals (Shohat & Stam 1997, p. 178).

1.4. Essay Disposition

This essay is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to the research problem that will be analyzed. In the background chapter, the reader is provided with the information necessary to understand the problem studied. Next, the aim of the essay is presented, followed by its delimitations. Chapter two accounts for the previous research that has been conducted on the research problem studied in this essay.

Chapter three presents the theories that are used to analyze the empirical material and chapter four discusses the empirical material used to study the aim of the essay, as well as the method chosen to perform the analysis. The result of the analyses will then be accounted for in chapter five, as well as compared to and related to previous research. Chapter six discusses the result of the film analyses in relation to the theoretical perspectives. The essay is finally concluded with a brief summary of its contents, with an emphasis on aim and theoretical framework, as well as a presentation of the most important results of the analysis.

2. Previous Research

In this chapter, previous research related to black representation in film will be discussed. This chapter consists of three journal articles that all debate this research problem. The first two articles concern American films and the third Swedish film. The reason why American articles have been included in this chapter is that there has not been that much research performed on black representation in Swedish film. A search on “black representation in
Swedish film/cinema”, “race in Swedish film/cinema”, “racism in Swedish film/cinema” and “ethnicity in Swedish film/cinema” in the databases Summon, Film & Television Literature Index, Libris, Communication & Mass Media Complete and Google Scholar, only generated one article that relates to the topic. This article is Gustafsson (2008) and it will be accounted for in this chapter. A similar search was also conducted in the same databases using the same search word, but instead of “Swedish film/cinema”, the search concerned “Sweden” as well as “Swedish media”. However, this search did not result in any articles relevant to the subject studied in this essay either. The lack of previous research concerning black representation in Swedish film also further motivates the undertaking of such study, since there is a current gap in previous research that this study can fill.

The previous research chapter is finally concluded with a discussion of the articles and how they relate to the study of this essay. They will also be compared to one another.

It is important to note that it is not necessarily problematic to apply studies concerning American cinema to a study of Swedish film. As was mentioned in the background chapter, some of the negative representations of black people in Swedish films were imported from American cinema in the 1920s (Gustafsson 2008, p. 36f.). Since many American films are still being imported to Sweden today, it is possible that American cinema still influences how black people are represented in Swedish film.

In their article “Naturalizing Racial Differences through Comedy: Asian, Black and White Views on Racial Stereotypes in Rush Hour 2”, Park, Gabbadon & Chernin study racial stereotypes and jokes in comedy by departing from the film Rush Hour 2 (2001). The authors also examine audience’s response to this film through a test group consisting of Asian, black and white members (Park & Gabbadon & Chernin 2006). However, since the aim of this essay is not to study black representation through audience response, this part of the article will not be included in this chapter.

In a racist society, racial jokes and stereotypes are used in order to obtain racist hierarchies. Comedies that are based on race, often present racially stereotyped non-whites as deviant by comparing them to the dominant whites. Even when films want to make parodies of the absurdity and illogicality of black stereotyping, they still internalize oppressive images of black people (Park & Gabbadon & Chernin 2006, p. 159).

Comedies have the opportunity to make social commentary by challenging the issues of reproducing stereotypes. However, this is something that they rarely do. For example in 48 Hours (1982), Reggie Hammond (Eddie Murphy) never complains or takes offence when
Jack Cates (Nick Nolte) makes offensive racist jokes about him. This form of narrative serves the purpose of neutralizing racism (Park & Gabbadon & Chernin 2006, p. 159).

It is also possible to stereotype a character that represents a minority group in many different ways in one and the same film. In *Rush Hour 2* (2001) James Carter (Chris Tucker) is both a loud and hypersexual black man who, in the same time, is childish. Since most of the jokes in this film are made about minority groups, it makes white people feel good about themselves in the same time as it strengthens their dominant position. When minority characters make racist jokes, the jokes become neutralized since people are used to see minority groups as victims of racism and not as people reproducing the racist ideology. This sends the message to the spectator that it is acceptable to laugh at these jokes since they cannot be racist (Park & Gabbadon & Chernin 2006, p. 163f.).

The article “*Always a Partner in Crime: Black Masculinity in the Hollywood Detective Film*” studies black masculinity and sexuality in crime films (Gates 2004). Gates argues that the detective film is no different from other mainstream films in that the hero is usually a white man. Images of black people on film usually consist of token roles instead of characters that represent the actual black experience. It is also common to describe the black experience without discussing race issues (Gates 2004, p. 21).

Masculine black men are seen as a threat because they have the potential to be perceived as attractive by white women or to themselves be attracted to white women. In order to restrain this threat, films use different strategies, for example to let the black male character be married to a black woman and to represent him as a devoted husband and father. An example of this type of character is Joe Miller (Denzel Washington) in *Philadelphia* (Jonathan Demme, 1993) (Gates 2004, p. 23).

Another strategy is to prevent the black male character from having a romantic relationship with women altogether, like Gray Grantham (Denzel Washington) in *The Pelican Brief* (Alan J. Pakula, 1993). In this film, Grantham is denied a romantic relationship with Darby Shaw (Julia Roberts) even though both these characters have the conditions to develop such a relationship, which is also common in this type of film. Another part of this strategy is to not allow the black character to have a family at all in the same time as he is claimed not to have any interest in women. This can be found in Alex Cross (Morgan Freeman) in *Kiss the Girls* (Gary Fleder, 1997) and *Along came a Spider* (Lee Tamahori, 2001) (Gates 2004, p. 23).

Films can oversimplify racist issues by claiming that they can be solved quite easily during a film’s plot. A film’s time and space is also only occupied by white characters. The whites are in the center of the narrative while the black characters are in the margins. To be in the
center of the narrative means to have power and those in the margins do not. A common function for black characters in cinema is to only exist in relation to the white characters (Gates 2004, p. 25).

Another issue discussed by Gates is mainstream cinema’s unwillingness to address social power structures. This is conducted in films through what Gates describes as a strategy of containment. In Devil in a Blue Dress (Carl Franklin, 1995), this containment or limitation is made by claiming that segregation and the unwillingness to accept interracial relationships is all part of the past. By doing this, the film isolates racism to something that belongs in the past and refuses to acknowledge that racism still exists in contemporary society (2004, p. 26).

In his article “The Visual Re-creation of Black people in a ‘White’ Country: Oscar Micheaux and Swedish Film Culture in the 1920s”, Gustafsson examines how the Swedish Board of Censorship as well as the advertisers treated Oscar Micheaux’s films Within our Gates (1920), The Brute (1920) and The Symbol of the Unconquered (1920) when they were imported to Sweden (2008, p. 30). In addition, he examines black representation in Swedish films during the silent film era (Gustafsson 2008, p. 30). Since the aim of this essay is not to study black representation through film distribution, advertising or film censorship, the reception of Oscar Micheaux’s films is not relevant for this study. Therefore, only the part of Gustafsson’s (2008) article that examines black representation in Swedish film during the silent film era will be accounted for in this chapter.

Gustafsson’s study shows that there were negative representations of black people in Swedish films during the silent film era. These films were dominated by three different black stereotypes (2008, p. 36-46): The savage stereotype was commonly used in documentary films and its purpose was to present white Swedish men as civilized and African peoples as primitive. Another way of depicting black people as savages was to portray them as exotic cannibals. This portrayal was common in all kinds of films, ranging from documentaries to feature films (Gustafsson 2008, p. 38; p. 41). The third common stereotype was the loyal Uncle Tom servant that was used in feature films. The latter means that blacks were represented as submissive servants. These characters were played by both male and female actors, as well as by child actors (Gustafsson 2008, p. 37; p. 43). A more thorough description of the Uncle Tom stereotype will be made in the Theoretical Perspective chapter.

In Among Savages and Wild Beasts (1921), the tribal men are coded as lazy and irrational. This depiction is also used about the other tribes visited, with the exception of the Masai, who instead are coded as cowards that need the white Swedish men to protect them and rescue them from wild animals (Gustafsson 2008, p. 38).
The subordinate Uncle Tom stereotype was mostly included in feature films during the silent film era. This was also the most common image that was presented about blacks in those days. One example of these films is *En perfekt gentleman* (*A Perfect Gentleman*, Vilhelm Bryde & Gösta Ekman, 1927). In this film, black actress Desdemona Schlichting plays a servant, which was the biggest role a black actor or actress played in Swedish film during this time. *A Perfect Gentleman* (1927) also includes a very common portrayal of black submission by showing Schlichting’s character on her knees in the bathroom wiping Hortense’s feet (Gustafsson 2008, p. 44).

2.1. Discussion

Park, Gabbadon and Chernin’s article (2006) and Gates’ (2004) article are similar since both of these studies examine black representation from a genre perspective. They both give examples of common ways for how each one of these respective film genres represent black people. These studies are relevant to this essay because four of the films analyzed belong to the detective film genre and comedy genre respectively.

Gustafsson (2008) also considers genre in his study, with the difference that he discusses common black stereotypes in different genres, like documentaries and feature films. This also makes his study similar to that of Park, Gabbadon and Chernin (2006), with the important difference that Park, Gabbadon and Chernin (2006) do not give examples of specific stereotypes other than when they analyze the film *Rush Hour 2* (2001). Most of their article concerns describing stereotypes’ functions and consequences in films, in the same time as their study also concerns jokes made about non-white characters, something that Gustafsson (2008) does not do. This is however an important and useful aspect for the further study of this essay because it provides a deeper understanding of character portrayal. Gates (2004) on the other hand, does not study stereotyping at all in her research.

A difference between the three articles is that they examine black representation from different times. The empirical material analyzed in Parks, Gabbadon and Chernin’s (2006) study and Gates’ (2004) studies is more contemporary while Gustafsson’s (2008) empirical material consists of films from the silent film era. To compare the article of Park, Gabbadon and Chernin (2006) and the article of Gates (2004) to Gustafsson’s (2008) therefore complete the study of Gustafsson by providing a deeper understanding of black representation in films produced in the twenty-first century.
The types of black representations that Gustafsson (2008) discusses are however useful because they provide a historical background that creates a foundation, which can be used to compare the films analyzed in this essay with the representation of blacks in Swedish silent films in the 1920s. Such a study can suggest which ways of representing black people that are still used in contemporary films and which are no longer accurate.

All these articles provide a good starting-point for the further study of this essay since they discuss black representation from a genre perspective. They thereby complete the theories because none of the theories provide an in-depth discussion of genre. These articles can thus be used in order to gain a deeper and more thorough understanding of black representation as a research problem.

3. Theoretical Perspective

This chapter will provide the theories that will be used in order to analyze the empirical material. It is divided into three sections, where the first presents the theories that discuss black representation and the second theories regarding how whiteness operates in film. This is followed by a discussion where I account for how the theories will be applied to the empirical material and why they have been selected, as well as the theories’ weaknesses.

3.1. Black Representation

Shohat and Stam argue that the Eurocentric ideology is represented in all kinds of contemporary media and in society in general. This also applies to countries like Australia, the USA and South America. Eurocentrism has also been normalized and is seen as common sense (1997, p. 1). Shohat and Stam state that racism creates a form of ethnic solidarity where people are encouraged to sympathize with, what is defined as “we”, in the same time as they hold antipathy toward people that are coded as “they”. This manifests itself in mainstream media where the lives of, for example Africans, are presented as less worth than the lives of Europeans. Media also focuses on the sufferings of the dominant group instead of exposing the system of oppression. Another example of this is to claim that whites will suffer if they help black people. This is a myth usually referred to as “reverse racism” (1997, p. 24f.).

A key concept of Shohat and Stam’s theory is voice. By the term voice, they mean discourse and they argue that films are statements as well as representations. Therefore it is important to analyze which stories that are told and which discourses a film uses, as well as
which ideologies that are being reproduced (1997, p. 180f.). Just because a character is black
does not mean that the voice is necessarily black. It is therefore important to analyze the
discourse that speaks through the African Swedish characters. This makes it necessary to
study whose perspective the film is told from and which characters the audience is
encouraged to identify with. Voice also manifests itself in a film’s casting, because the
leading roles are usually played by whites, while the black characters only have supporting
roles. Voice also takes the form of point-of-view perspective. A film can allow an ethnic
character occasional situations of subjectivity while the white characters are the center of
attention and the ones that tell the story from their perspective (Shohat & Stam 1997, p. 214;
p. 189; p. 205).

Discrimination can be achieved through a film’s cinematic parts as well, for example
through cinematography and lighting (Shohat & Stam 1997, p. 208; Jilani 2015, p. 105-113).
Shohat and Stam argue that a film’s cinematography can benefit the white characters by
centering them in the frame and by placing them right before the camera. The black
characters, on the other hand, are not centered in the frame, in the same time as they are
placed in the background of the shot (1997, p. 208).

Lighting can be used in order to shadow a black character, which prevents the spectator
from identifying with him or her (Jilani 2015, p. 107). Examples of this can be seen in The
Tragedy of Othello: the Moor of Venice (Orson Welles, USA, 1952) (Jilani 2015). When films
construct lighting, they do so with the purpose of highlighting the characters. The aim is to
separate them from the background so that they do not merge into it. Lighting also makes
the characters visible in terms of narration so that the most important characters in each scene are
highlighted. This is done by eliminating shadows to allow the spectator to see the characters
clearly. However, the lighting apparatus was originally constructed for photographing white
people, and this approach to film lighting remains the same today. To photograph non-white
people is usually referred to as a problem (Dyer 1997, p. 86f.; p. 96; p. 89).

Film lighting is also used in order to focus on the individuality of each character. The
lighting is constructed in order to fit a character’s personality. Since dominant culture
considers whites most important, they are placed in the center of the narrative and become
more visible through lighting, in the same time as the lighting is constructed to present them
as unique individuals. Non-white people, on the other hand, are not recognized as unique
individuals in society, and therefore film lighting is often not constructed to code them as
individuals either. Lighting in films is constructed in a hierarchal way, and this hierarchy
dictates which characters are supposed to be seen as more important than others (Dyer 1997, p. 102).

Discrimination can also be achieved by letting the white characters appear more often than the black ones. Other ways for a film to use discriminatory discourses toward blacks is by portraying the black characters as passive and undesirable and as lacking clear goals, as well as the film can express white hierarchy by creating a subjectivity that benefits the white characters (Shohat & Stam 1997, p. 208). Another form of discrimination, which relates to Dyer’s theory (1997, p. 102), is to see black people as a single homogenous group instead of unique individuals. White people, on the other hand, are seen as diverse because there are many different ways of representing them. This manifests itself in that when a white person does something wrong, for example commits a crime, he or she is not seen as representative of all white people. This phenomenon is referred to as “the mark of the plural” because a black person that does something wrong is seen as a representative of all blacks. Thus, it has a negative impact on all black people (Shohat & Stam 1997, p. 183; Pallas 2011, p. 123). White people that commit despicable acts are also allowed to explain their behavior, for example by describing their actions as a result of different circumstances. When non-white characters commit heinous acts, they are not granted the same privilege. Instead, their behavior is explained as a part of their culture. The behavior of white Swedes, on the other hand, is never referred to as a part of the Swedish culture (Pallas 2011, p. 123-125).

Films can create different degrees of blackness. This is, for example, achieved by coding black Swedes as “better” than black Africans (Fanon 1968, p. 26; Means Coleman 2011, p. 56). It can also manifest itself in that light-skinned actors play the leading roles while those with dark skin complexion play supporting ones. The light-skinned characters are also coded as “better” than the dark skinned ones (Smith 2003, p. 38f.).

When black people protest against cases of discrimination, they are often punished for it. By protesting, they question the dominant group’s actions as well as the racial structures in society, and the punishment serves the purpose of defending the hegemonic group’s power, as well as to encourage African Swedes to accept being treated as inferior (Wigerfelt & Wigerfelt & Kiiskinen (2014, p. 5f.).

Stereotypes are used in order to marginalize black characters by only allowing them to play the roles of for example servants or criminals. Since the stories in the same time only evolve around the white characters, it reproduces the ideology that black people’s only existence is in relation to whites (Diawara 2011, p. 595f.). Films can also represent black people as a liability to society (Diawara 2011, p. 595f.; Fanon 1968, p. 98). Black women are often depicted as
unattractive, especially in relation to white women, who are coded as beautiful and desirable (Tobing Rony 2011, p. 851). However, black women can also be coded as objects of desire as well as being represented as helpless victims (Breaux 2010, p. 399).

There are also more specific black stereotypes that have their own names. One of these is Uncle Tom. This stereotype is named after a character in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852). He is a docile, caring and submissive person who is always loyal to his white masters, even when they treat him bad (Francis 2012, p. 332; Liberato & Foster 2011, p. 376). He does not get involved with politics either. The Uncle Tom character has changed since Stowe’s novel was published. Some traits have been altered while some remain the same (Francis 2012, p. 332). A more contemporary example of the Uncle Tom stereotype can for example be found in *Driving Miss Daisy* (Bruce Beresford, USA, 1989) where Hoke (Morgan Freeman) is a reproduction of this stereotype (Liberato & Foster 2011, p. 376). *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989) also gives examples of how elderly white women are coded as non-racist, even though they use racist discourses. Daisy’s racism is blamed on her dementia, and therefore she is unaware of being a racist (Liberato & Foster 2011, p. 376).

Shohat and Stam argue that it is important to study black stereotypes because such a study allows the scholar to expose oppressive patterns and demonstrate that they are not just random but systematic. It can also reveal that stereotyping functions as a form of social control (1997, p. 198).

However, it is also problematic to study stereotypes in that it is easy to read too much into a character and thus the analysis becomes too far-fetched. The character might be complex, but the scholar takes a part of the character out of context and, thus, draws the conclusion that the character is a stereotype. He or she can, for example, interpret a caring and helpful black man as a reproduction of the Uncle Tom stereotype even when the character is not. Another issue with this type of analysis, is that films do not necessary rely on stereotyping in order to create oppressive discourses. This can also be done in many other ways (Shohat & Stam 1997, p. 199; p. 201). Francis agrees with Shohat and Stam (1997) in that it is important to consider the film’s narrative and ideology when you study black characters in a film. She states the importance of studying the specific narrative context in the given film when analyzing the black characters (Francis 2012, p. 332).
3.2. Whiteness

In order to obtain its dominance, white power is made invisible. Whites are coded as normal, as status quo, and all non-white groups are measured against them. This for example manifests itself in the way blackness is presented as being different from being white. White people are also coded as human, humble and universal (Dyer 2011, p. 825; Pallas 2011, p. 61). The constructed normalization of whiteness is so predominant that it is not noticed in the same way as blackness is (Shome 1996, p. 503).

Whiteness is a social and historical construction, but instead of presenting itself as such, it is suggested as just being a coincidence. It is also such a vague term that it has to be defined as something else, for example as “Swedish” or “middleclass” (Dyer 2011, p. 825f.). Just like there are different degrees of blackness, whiteness also has a hierarchal structure. This manifests itself in that Nordic whites are seen as superior to other whites. In Sweden, whiteness is used as a symbol of what it means to be Swedish (Pallas 2011, p. 21).

In films there is a connection between space and ethnicity in that a character’s ethnical background dictates if he or she has the right to possess a space or not. As soon as a white character occupies a certain space, he or she becomes invisible. The non-white characters, on the other hand, have to explain their presence within that space. Since the world has been constructed as white, whites are the only ones accepted within that world. Non-whites are not seen as people who belong within this space and therefore their presence is questioned (Pallas 2011, p. 53f.).

A way of denying that whiteness and racism is a set of complex power structures is to claim that the racist ideology is only adopted by a few extreme groups or people (Pallas 2011, p. 82; Eriksson Baaz 2001, p. 165). This is achieved in films by presenting openly racist characters as the only ones that can be racist (Pallas 2011, p. 82).

Another way that films construct unequal power balances between white and black characters is by reproducing the myth of the white savior. This character functions as a hero or heroine that saves blacks, who are in turn presented as helpless victims in need of white people to rescue them (Liberato & Foster 2011, p. 373-375; Shome 1996, p. 504-512). This character is especially used in films set in former colonized countries to reproduce the ideology that the natives are incapable of taking care of themselves (Shome 1996, p. 504; Eriksson Baaz 2001, p. 172f.). In film, it is the white characters that are coded as active by saving people or animals from disease or other dangers. The black actors and actresses, on the other hand, are reduced to play minor roles as assistants to the white heroes or heroines. In the
same time, the African characters are denied subjectivity so that their thoughts, opinions and actions remain unknown to the viewer (Eriksson Baaz 2001, p. 174).

The myth of whites rescuing black people stems from the 18th century, where Africans were perceived as lazy and passive. They were also described as people living with an extensive surplus that they did not take advantage of since they did not cultivate the land. The white man, on the other hand, was coded as enterprising and, therefore, he could inspire the Africans to abandon their idleness (Eriksson Baaz 2001, p. 172f.).

Another common myth about white people is reproduced when Swedish women are represented as white and blonde. This fits into the assumption that blonde white people are superior to all whites. In some films, the blonde white woman is a character that needs to be rescued, especially by a white man (Pallas 2011, p. 67). In films, white women are also used as a symbol of the nation. In this case, race and gender are combined as a way of defining a nation’s borders and, thus, also the preservation of whites as an ethnic group (Pallas 2011, p. 63f.; Tesfahuney 2001, p. 209).

Another theory concerning white women, is that of Mathis (2001). She states that whiteness is equal to the patriarchy and that it helps shaping people’s identities, regardless of gender. Gender and ethnicity depend on one another in order to create the perception of white women’s identity in the Western World (2001, p. 51f.).

The perceived differences of races, as well as those of gender, are considered natural. The consequences of this ideology is that racist myths and gender myths respectively, correspond to and enhance one another. Therefore, a white female character may come across as liberated from the patriarchy, for example by being coded as brave and independent. However, she still obtains and defends the patriarchal structures by reproducing its colonial and racist discourses (Mathis 2001, p. 59f.).

3.3. Discussion

These theories have been selected because they discuss black representation from different perspectives. When combining all these theories, they complete one another. Neither one of these theories contradict one another. It is true that Shohat and Stam state the importance of not performing a study of black representation exclusively on stereotypes because films can use other forms of oppressive discourses as well (Shohat & Stam 1997, p. 199; p. 201). Francis also emphasizes the importance of taking ideology and narrative context into consideration (2012, p. 332). However, neither one of these theories are contradicted by the
other scholars, because not a single one of them argues that studies on black representation should focus exclusively on the examination of stereotyping. Neither do their studies only concern stereotyping. Instead they all combine theories regarding stereotyping with theories discussing other forms of black representation.

This essay will use theories about black stereotypes to examine whether they are represented in the objects of research and, if so, to which extent. It will also study if there are certain stereotypes that are predominating over others. These theories will be combined with those of Shohat and Stam (1997) to examine if the films’ cinematic aspects are used to create discriminatory discourses against the black characters in the same time as they give benefits to the white characters. Shohat and Stam’s (1997) theory about voice is also important in order to examine which discourses are used in the films as well as to analyze which characters are granted subjectivity. The films will also be studied with the purpose of examining whether they present white people as normal in the same time as they present the black characters as other.

Theories about whiteness will be used in this essay to compare the white character portrayals to those of the black characters. The purpose of such a study is to examine if whiteness is presented as normal while blackness is coded as deviant and how this operates. Theories about whiteness will also help analyze whether the white characters are the only ones allowed to occupy the filmic spaces and if the black characters have to explain their presence within those spaces.

A weakness with Shohat and Stam’s theories concerning narrative, cinematography and lightning (1997, p. 208), is that they can only be applied to films that use classic Hollywood cinema narrative. In Art cinema, it is common for characters to be for example passive. Art cinema films often use low-key lighting, which denies all characters the opportunity of being highlighted. Objects can also be placed in front of the characters, which prevents the audience from seeing them clearly, in the same time as characters are not necessarily centered in the frame. A certain filmic aspect can be used by the director, not as a discursive practice, but simply because he or she wants it that way. It is thus not necessarily oppressive if a black character is represented as, for example, passive in an art film. This will however not cause a problem in this essay since all the films analyzed use classic Hollywood cinema narrative.

A problem with using theories about whiteness when studying black representation is that these theories only focus on analyzing the white characters and how whiteness operates in a film. This will, however, not cause a problem since this study combines theories about whiteness with theories about black representation.
4. Material and Method

This chapter will describe the empirical material that this essay aims to analyze. It will also account for how the selection has been done and motivate why this particular material has been selected. Next, this chapter discusses the method that will be used to perform the analysis of the material, as well as the problems that can occur when using this method.

4.1. Empirical Material and Selection


In order to be able to study black representation in Swedish film, it is important that the films are produced in or at least coproduced in Sweden and that their diegesis is set in or partly set in a Swedish context. Another important aspect to consider in this type of study is that the films have to include at least one black character and that he or she must have a role big enough for analysis. A character that only appears in one brief scene as an extra will thus not be suitable since it is impossible to grasp such a character’s portrayal. The films that have been selected for this analysis, have been chosen because they all fill the criteria stated above.

Another criteria for selection is that the films belong to different genres, which is important in order to get an understanding of how Swedish film represents black people. If all the films had for example been comedies, it would only be possible to make statements about black representation in Swedish comedies, not about Swedish films in general. All the films have different directors, which is important because otherwise it would only be possible to study black representation in one particular director’s artwork.

It is also important to note that only five films are analyzed in this essay. To select a higher number of films is more ideal, since it allows for more general conclusions to be drawn. However, due to the limited timeframe of the essay, such an extensive examination is not possible.

There are other films that could have been selected for this analysis, for example *Play* (2011) and *Little Pink and all the Motley Little Ones* (2012), which were both mentioned in
the introduction of this essay. However, *Little Pink and all the Motley Little Ones* (2012) has been rejected due to the fact that it is animated. As mentioned in the delimitations chapter, only live-action films will be analyzed in this study. *Play* (2011) and *Little Pink and all the Motley Little Ones* (2012) have also not been selected since they have already been debated over their depiction of black people. It is therefore more interesting to analyze films that have not been the target of such criticism.

It is also important to note that the selected films about Johan Falk, Kurt Wallander and Irene Huss are part of a long series of films. However, *Protected by Shadows* (2011) is the only film about Irene Huss that includes black characters. From the Wallander series the film *Afrikanen* (*The African*, Stephan Apelgren, Sweden, 2005) could have been selected for analysis because it contains two black characters. However, *Firewall* (2006) was finally selected since it has been coproduced by the Swedish public service network, SVT, while *The African* (2005) is instead coproduced by TV4, a commercial television channel. It is therefore more interesting to analyze *Firewall* (2006) since the purpose of SVT is to serve the public. Therefore, it is important to study how black people are represented in this particular film.

*The 107 Patriots* (2012) was selected because it contains several black characters while the other Johan Falk films only feature one black character, Niklas. To select a film that includes several black characters allows a more thorough study to be made regarding how the film represents black people because there are more black characters to study.

Below follows a closer presentation of the films studied.

*The class Reunion* (2001) is a comedy that evolves around Magnus (Björn Kjellman/Oskar Taxén), who lives a routine-like life with his wife Lollo (Cecilia Frode) and their daughter. When he is invited to a class reunion, he at first does not want to attend, but changes his mind as he realizes that Hillevi (Inday Ba/Sacha Baptiste), his former classmate that he also had a crush on, might be there.

*White Trash* (2005) is a romantic comedy about Rita (Eva Röse) who works as a hairdresser at a dog salon. She is struggling to find purpose in life and is hectored by her foster mother Edith (Lena Nyman). She signs up for a New Age seminar where she meets Knut (Niklas Engdahl), who is an undercover journalist that only attends the seminar in order to find material for an article he is working on. Rita falls in love with Knut, not knowing that he is only using her to get his story.

*Wallander: Firewall* (2006) is a detective film that evolves around Inspector Kurt Wallander (Rolf Lassgård) and his colleagues. They investigate the murder of a taxi driver as well as the mysterious death of a man that collapses on the square.
Irene Huss: Protected by Shadows (2011) is also a detective film that evolves around Inspector Irene Huss (Angela Kovács) and her colleagues. They investigate the murder of a man that has been executed and the traces lead to a criminal biker gang. Soon the gang also starts pressuring Irene’s husband Krister (Ruben Salmander) to pay his former colleague’s debt to the gang.

Johan Falk: De 107 Patriots (2012) is a combination of an action film and a detective film. The story begins with two criminal gangs settling up, which leads to the accidental shooting and killing of a five-year-old girl. Her father, who is a member of another gang, sets out to retaliate at the person who killed her. This leads to the outbreak of a gang war in Gothenburg.

4.2.1. Method

This study consists of an analysis of five films produced in the 21st century. They are all produced in or coproduced in Sweden. The films will be analyzed through different theories about black representation and whiteness, as well as compared to previous research. The analyses will make it plain which theories are most relevant to adopt on each film and the theories’ relevance will be discussed as well.

The black characters and the white characters will be studied respectively to examine whether the representation of the black characters differ from the representation of the white ones. Since the films studied use classic Hollywood cinema narrative, it will be examined whether the black characters take on an active or passive role in the films. The purpose of such an analysis is to study whether the black characters are allowed to contribute to the plot by making actions that propel the story. Even other aspects of the films’ narrative, for example if the black characters have goals, will be studied because this can have an impact on the representation of the characters.

The spaces presented in the films will also be studied in order to see which characters are coded as those that belong in those spaces. The purpose of this is to explore if the black characters have to explain or excuse their presence within these spaces or if their occupancy is seen as so obvious and natural that it does not need an explanation. It will also be examined how often the African Swedish characters appear compared to the white ones, as well as if and how often they are granted subjectivity and during which circumstances their subjectivity occur. The number of black characters will also be studied, because this can have an impact on how often they appear and, thus, their possibility of subjectivity.
The study will also examine which roles the black characters play, that is to say, whether they play leading roles or supporting ones. The purpose of this type of study is to see whether or not it is possible to identify with the black characters, since the main characters are the ones that most often get point-of-view perspective and appear more often than the other characters. Even in the cases where the African Swedish characters do not play leading roles or main characters, the possibility of identification will be explored.

The relationships between the white and the black characters will be studied as well in order to examine whether the films obtain unequal power structures. The analyses will also study how the films’ cinematography and lighting operate to see which characters are benefited from these aspects. Another aspect studied, is if black stereotypes are reproduced and if so, how frequently they occur and if there are certain stereotypes that dominate over others.

4.2.2. Methodology Problems

A problem with this research method is subjectivity, that is to say, there is a chance of making over-interpretations. This issue can be solved by thorough reflection on whether it is possible to make more than one interpretation of the films’ different aspects. Before it is possible to take sides with one specific interpretation, it has to be made plain in the films that this is the preferred interpretation.

Since the aim of this essay is to study black representation exclusively, it will not be able to determine how other minority groups are represented in the analyzed films. That is to say that, even if the film analysis would show that the films do not use discriminatory discourses toward black people, it is still possible that they discriminate against other groups. Neither will the selected method be able to determine if the representation of the black characters differ depending on their age, gender or class-background, since such an intersectional analysis falls out of the aim of this essay.

As Shohat and Stam (1997) and Francis (2012) state, there are problems with the studying of black stereotypes because films can use other oppressive discourses as well (Shohat & Stam 1997, p. 201; Francis 2012, p. 332). It is also problematic since one might read too much into the characters and thereby find reproductions of stereotypes even though the characters are not being stereotyped (Shohat & Stam 1997, p. 199.). The first problem is not an issue in this essay because the analysis does not focus exclusively on stereotyping. The second problem can be overcome by studying the African Swedish characters in relation to
the specific context of the narrative, just like Francis (2012, p. 332) advises. If a black character is, for example attacked by another character, it can only be expected of him or her to fight back and, thus, it is not to be seen as a stereotyped portrayal of an irrational black person or of a criminal.

5. Result

In this chapter, the result of the film analysis will be presented. The chapter is finally concluded with a discussion where the results are compared to and related to previous research.

5.1.1 The Class Reunion (2001)

In The Class Reunion (2001), Hillevi is the only black character. She is immediately coded as black already in the film’s opening scene. In this scene, young Magnus is stopped by Tommy and his friends whereupon Tommy asks where the “**n****r ball”¹ is. This is the former, offensive name of a Swedish small cake consisting of cocoa powder and oats, sprinkled with coconut flakes. The coding of Hillevi as black then continues throughout the film. This is for example also seen in the scene when young Hillevi walks down the school corridor and Jeanette and Åsa call her Kunta Kinte, Darth Vader and, again, n****r ball. Neither Hillevi nor the other characters protest against the racist names that she is called. The Class Reunion (2001) thus neutralizes racism.

None of the students calls Hillevi racist names at an adult age. Even though Åsa and Jeanette still clearly distastes Hillevi, so much that they do not even invite her to the reunion, their hate for her no longer has anything to do with her being black. They just simply do not like Hillevi. Tommy does not even hold a grudge against Hillevi anymore and gladly welcomes her in to join the party. This contains racism to be a part of childhood, that it is something that only children do and not adults. Since not all students but only Tommy, Jeanette and Åsa ascribe racist names to Hillevi, racism is also contained to something that is only found among certain individuals, which also serves to deny the fact that it is a set of power structures.

¹ To write this word in its uncensored form would have increased the understanding of its negative impact when used in the film. However, since the author strongly dissociates herself from the use of this word, it only appears in its censored form in this text.
On several occasions, Hillevi has to explain her presence in certain spaces, for example in Sweden. When Magnus returns to Hagsättra and visits Hillevi’s childhood home, the fortuneteller describes the girl that used to live in the house as blond and claims that she had blue eyes. Magnus corrects her by explaining that Hillevi is adopted from Africa. This could be interpreted as a way of challenging people’s prejudice perceptions of who is to be defined as Swedish, and also to challenge prejudice regarding who has the right to occupy the space as a resident in a middleclass neighborhood. Since the film is a comedy, it is possible that it could create humor through questioning prejudice. However, the purpose of this scene is to make fun of the fortuneteller, who obviously does not possess any psychic abilities. Her inability to tell Magnus’ fortune, also allows him to tell the story of how he met Hillevi from his own perspective and, thus, grants him subjectivity. This scene also demonstrates how Hillevi has to explain her presence in a middle class neighborhood. Had she been white, on the other hand, she would not have had to do this, since it is expected that blonde white girls belong in this environment. Since Hillevi is a Swedish name, she also has to explain that a black girl can carry this name as well.

Another example is the scene when the teacher introduces young Hillevi to the class. She states, “as you can see, Hillevi is not from Hagsättra”. Hillevi replies that she is from Trollhättan, whereupon the other students laugh. The teacher then asks if the is adopted and Hillevi confirms that she is adopted from Senegal. The teacher then proclaims that “Hillevi is Swedish now”, something that Hillevi denies by stating that she is Danish and that her family did not move to Sweden until she was two years old. This could also be seen as a way of challenging prejudice, but the preferred interpretation is that Hillevi has to explain her presence in the all-white suburb Hagsättra, as well as in Sweden as a whole. This becomes clear, since she states that she is adopted from Senegal. A black person can, thus, not have been born in Sweden, or in Denmark, but he or she must have moved there from Africa. Since Magnus in the scene prior to this one, has already coded Hillevi as an African adoptee, this scene merely serves the purpose of reestablishing her as such. The teacher’s comment that Hillevi has “become Swedish” also confirms this interpretation. Hillevi can, thus, not have been born Swedish or Danish, but she must have become Swedish or Danish.

At first, Hillevi comes across as a very strong person. In one scene, she walks across the schoolyard with her head held high as Tommy and one of his friends drive their mopeds right towards her. Instead of stepping aside, Hillevi just keeps on walking, which forces Tommy and his friend to drive around her. This results in their mopeds crashing into one another and they overturn. This scene demonstrates that Hillevi is not someone that allows other people to
push her around, as well as it codes her as brave. In another scene, young Tommy and his friends have pushed Magnus up against a fence and prepare to hit him. Hillevi first tries to make Tommy stop by verbally encouraging him to do so. When this fails, she hits him with a baseball bat. This is, however, not an aggressive or violent behavior, but simply a last resort since Tommy refused to listen when she told him to stop. Her facial expression also clearly marks that she regrets what she has done.

Another example of how the film codes Hillevi as brave, as well as independent, is when she flees to Amsterdam. Even though the reason for her departure is the attack on Tommy, it is still brave of a fifteen-year-old girl to move to Amsterdam all by herself. It also shows that she is an independent person since she has the ability to go abroad and make a living all on her own. At the class reunion, Hillevi interferes when Jeanette and Sussie harass Boel in the restroom. Hillevi does not back down even when the fight becomes physical. This codes Hillevi, not only as brave, but also as someone that is compassionate and stands up for the weak, just like in the scene when she defends Magnus against Tommy.

There are also other examples of Hillevi’s independence. This becomes clear after Hillevi returns to Amsterdam after the class reunion when her relationship with Magnus is developing too quickly. Thus, Hillevi appears as a person who needs her freedom and is not willing to give up her independence. She also wants the relationship to be on her conditions.

However, there are other aspects of the film that contradict Hillevi being an independent woman. Hillevi for example only receives a few point-of-view shots and the only times she is granted subjectivity is when she describes Magnus and their relationship. An example of this is their telephone conversation after the class reunion. Then Hillevi states that she wants to meet a man that she finds it natural to have children with. She also describes that they will live in a house near the water. The spectator is also granted to see that the man of Hillevi’s dreams is Magnus, even though she refuses to acknowledge this to him. Hillevi also lacks a context in the film. The only information the spectator receives about her is that she is adopted from Senegal and that she has previously lived in Denmark and Trollhättan. Her parents for example never appear, and Hillevi does not have any hobbies or other interests besides her relationship with Magnus. Neither does she have any friends. All the other characters in The Class Reunion (2001) have families, friends and hobbies, as well as other interests. We are not told what Hillevi has been doing in Amsterdam for all the years that she has been there, even though she has lived there for more than twenty years. Magnus, in contrast, has the ability to tell the audience everything about his life because he is the protagonist. The spectator is for example informed about his thoughts, dreams and family
situation. He therefore also gets the chance to explain his behavior, something that is denied Hillevi. She instead comes across as a mysterious person with no social life and no family, in the same time, as she does not have a past. Therefore, even though Hillevi at first appears to be an independent person, the film still codes her as dependent of Magnus, since her only purpose in the film is to exist in relation to him.


Samir (Eagle Eye Cherry) is the only black character in *White Trash* (2005). Immediately as he first appears in the film, attention is brought to his skin color. As Samir enters Edith’s bedroom to say hello to her, she starts screaming with fear. She later tells Rita that she dreamt that a “pakkis” was trying to strangle her. This is a derogatory word used about all non-whites, but especially about people from Pakistan. Since *White Trash* (2005) is a comedy, this situation is used in order to create humor and not to describe Edith’s behavior as wrong or irrational. These types of racial jokes regarding Samir being black, then recurs throughout the film.

Another example of the racial jokes made in *White Trash* (2005), is when Edith has covered her face with a newspaper. When Samir removes the paper, Edith’s face is covered with printer’s ink. Samir laughs and states that Edith almost looks like him, referring to the black ink in her face. Since Samir himself is black, this joke is coded as acceptable, because a black person is not perceived as racist. The racist in this joke is thus neutralized.

When Edith calls Rita to accuse Samir of stealing her jewelry, she refers to him as the n*****r ball. Instead of protesting against Edith’s use of a derogatory word against blacks, Rita covers it up by telling Knut that Edith is “a little crazy”. She then states that Edith the previous week had thought that a Danish pastry had stolen her silverware. Knut then also further explores the joke by claiming that he has been robbed by a small cake made of almond paste. Neither one of the two characters mention the inappropriateness of calling black people names like n*****r ball. Instead, they cover it up by making jokes about it.

Even though Edith is an openly racist person, none of the other characters makes her take responsibility for it. Samir laughs at her racist comments while Rita makes up excuses for Edith’s racist behavior. In one scene, Rita informs Lisbet that Edith is an old woman suffering from illness. This raises sympathy with Edith and thereby also excuses her racism. The fact that not even Samir protests, neutralizes Edith’s racism. Since he is not offended, the audience is encouraged to laugh at the racist jokes that Edith makes.
There are however two occasions when Samir does protest against the behavior of Edith. In the scene when Samir serves Edith her supper and she ignores his question by turning the volume up on the television, he angrily states that he is only there because he receives pay and not out of his own free will. This can be seen as a way for Samir to assert himself towards Edith’s mistreatment of him. However, this statement only reduces Samir to be a person that is willing to do everything for money, including letting someone abuse him. This thus denies Samir the power of free will that the statement implies that he has. Samir could easily just tell Rita that he does not want to work for Edith because of the way she treats him, no matter how much money Rita offers him.

In another scene, Samir is vacuuming the hallway while Edith eyes him from the bedroom. He clearly states that he does not want to be reduced to an object by slamming the bedroom door shut. Immediately afterwards, Edith calls Rita to accuse Samir of stealing her jewelry. Samir is thus punished for defying the racial hierarchy by refusing to be reduced to an object for white people to look at. The film however disguises that Edith is punishing Samir in this sequence because this sequence is used in order to bring the story forward. It is only because Edith has hidden the jewelry box that she has accused Samir of stealing that Rita finds the letter from her biological mother.

Another character in White Trash (2005), Mrs. Ekdahl, is also coded as racist. When she enters the salon, she tells Rita that it is not healthy to mix people. The fact that there are only two racist characters in the film, contains racism to only be found among certain individuals and thus denies the fact that racism is a set of power structures. In addition, both Edith and Mrs. Ekdahl change their opinions on non-whites throughout the film. After Mrs. Ekdahl has met Samir, she stops making racist statements about non-white people. Edith changes from saving newspaper articles concerning criminal immigrants to welcoming Samir into her life. After the point where she finally accepts Samir, she never saves another newspaper article. Racism is thus not only limited to certain people, but it is also coded as an issue that is easy to solve in the plot of a film. It also sends the message that the few racist people in society can easily change their opinions if they only meet a non-white person.

Samir is coded as a caring and compassionate person that enjoys serving other people. This combined with that he accepts Edith’s racist statements about him, in the same time as he himself contributes to the racist jokes in the film, makes him a reproduction of the Uncle Tom stereotype. He is also coded as an immigrant, something that becomes clear when Edith informs him that Rita is accustomed to “Swedish food”. Samir responds to this statement in his usual manner by laughing and asking Edith if she thinks he will put rat poison in the food.
This combined with Samir’s non-Swedish name, suggests that black people cannot be Swedish, but most have immigrated to the country. This thus gives an example of how Samir has to explain his presence in the space that is Sweden.

The white characters all change during the course of the film in the same time as they commit actions that propel the story. Edith for example propels the story by hiding the letter from Rita’s mother. Samir, on the other hand, is never allowed this opportunity. It is for example the council that has decided that Samir is the last home care helper that they will send Edith and not Samir himself. This results in Edith receiving the opportunity to stop being racist. Knut also changes from being a ruthless journalist willing to do everything for a story to becoming a humble person that quits his job to fulfill his dream of becoming an author. Rita changes from being an insecure person that lets people push her around to becoming a self-confident person who asserts herself. This is clearly manifested when she decides to open a combined hair salon for both the dogs and their owners. Samir on the other hand does not change. He remains the same caring and docile person throughout the entire film. In addition, his only role in *White Trash* (2005) is to exist in relation to Edith. This manifests itself clearly after Edith dies. From the moment Edith is taken ill, Samir disappears from the narrative of the film. This makes it plain that his only role in *White Trash* (2005) is to assist Edith so that Rita gets the opportunity to find herself. He thus not only assists Edith, but indirectly also Rita.

Samir does not have any friends or family either, something that further emphasizes that he only exists in relation to Edith. He also lacks goals, something that all the other characters have. Edith wants to prevent Rita from contacting her biological mother and Knut wants the opportunity to write a good story, while Rita wants to learn who she really is. Since the film uses classic Hollywood cinema narrative, it is expected that the characters should have clear goals and that their actions propel the story. However, this is something denied Samir. In addition, the fact that he is black is used in order to generate humor. His role in *White Trash* (2005) is thus just not to be an assistant, but also to be laughed at because he is black.

*White Trash* (2005) uses sparse lighting throughout, something that usually does not affect the audience’s possibility to see Samir clearly. However, in the sequence from Rita’s birthday party, the light comes in from the window behind Samir, which results in his face being completely shadowed. The light instead highlights his shirt and neck. The white characters on the other hand are fully lit in this sequence and therefore completely visible. The fact that the audience cannot see Samir’s face makes him blend into the background while the white characters stand out and are highlighted. Since Samir’s face is shadowed, the spectator is
denied the chance to see his facial expressions, which makes it hard to identify with him. Since Samir’s face is covered, he is also denied the possibility of receiving subjectivity, something that can be expressed with facial expressions. Since the lighting in this sequence makes Samir merge into the background, it also excludes him from the community. In this sequence, all Rita’s friends and family are gathered to celebrate her birthday. Since Samir blends into the background, it is clear that the audience is not supposed to see him as an important person in Rita’s life.

Another aspect that makes it hard for the audience to identify with Samir is that he is only granted subjectivity twice in the film. The first time is when he tells Edith that he is only working for her over the weekend because Rita has paid him and the second when he closes the door to prevent Edith from looking at him.

5.1.3. Wallander: Firewall (2006)

In Wallander: Firewall (2006) Solomon (Jonas William Wahlstedt) is the only black character that plays a role big enough for analysis. There are many other black characters as well, but they only appear as extras and can therefore not be analyzed. Solomon only appears in a few scenes, in comparison to the white characters who are the ones that dominate the occupancy of the frame.

At first, Solomon appears to be a very active character because he murders two people. He, for example, kills Sonja, whose murder the police then have to solve. This gives the impression that Solomon is allowed to contribute to the story by committing actions that bring it forward, something that is expected from a character in a film that uses Classic Hollywood cinema narrative. However, it is not Solomon himself that has decided to conduct these murders, but he only acts on direct orders from his adoptive father Carter (Rupert Holliday Evans). Solomon’s only purpose in the film is thus to act out the orders of Carter, something that he does without hesitation in the same time as he expresses the desire to please Carter. His role in the film is thus reduced to be the loyal assistant of his adoptive father rather than to be an active character.

An example of how eager Solomon is to please Carter and to follow his orders expresses itself during their meeting after Solomon has shot Brenda. He reminds Carter that he has previously stated that they should never resort to violence. His statement is made in a calm and neutral voice, completely free of criticism and judgement. When Carter then claims that
“justice sometimes requires violence”, Solomon’s face is still neutral and not judgmental. He does not protest or contradict Carter’s statement either.

There is only one occasion in *Firewall* (2006) when Solomon directly contradicts Carter’s orders and that happens when Carter tells him to shoot Wallander. With fear in his voice, Solomon reminds Carter that he has promised that it would not go this far. Carter simply responds by saying that “everything comes to this sooner or later”. This is the only time the film grants Solomon subjectivity. However, he does not pursue the protest but simply steps out of the car to prepare the shooting of Wallander. The only reason why he does not carry out the orders of Carter, is because other police officers arrive to Tynnes’ apartment and not because he has second thoughts about killing Wallander. Thus, once again Solomon obeys Carter’s orders without hesitation.

Solomon is Carter’s adoptive son and he and Carter refer to each other as “father” and “son” respectively. However, Carter does not treat Solomon as a son. Instead, he treats Solomon like an assistant whose only function is to fulfill Carter’s goals of liberating Africa. This combined with Solomon’s lack of subjectivity and goals of his own, reduces him to only exist in relation to Carter. The fact that Solomon is also loyal to Carter and never objects to his orders, in addition makes him a reproduction of the Uncle Tom stereotype.

Solomon is coded as black throughout the film. The detectives always refer to him as black, as well as the store clerk who has given Solomon Marianne’s package by mistake. The clerk describes Solomon as “black, black as coal”. This codes Solomon as deviant due to his dark skin, since none of the white characters are coded as white. This makes it plain that *Firewall* (2006) presents whiteness as normal and neutral and that it is therefore not necessary to focus on the white characters’ skin color.

Carter is a reproduction of the white savior myth. He is a white British man who is determined to save Africa by disabling the bank systems in the Western World. His care for Africa is established already in the first scene where Carter appears. In this scene, he administers a shot to a young African boy. During the procedure, he smiles kindly and speaks calmly and reassuringly to the boy. Later, when the boy dies, Carter’s face clearly expresses his frustration over the situation.

Carter and Elvira are the only characters that express any sympathy for the African continent throughout the film. There are only three central characters involved in the operation of liberating Africa: Carter, Tynnes and Elvira. What all these characters have in common is that they are white and that they are from the Western World. Not one single black African is involved with the group. The black Africans never express any discomfort about
their situation either, not like Carter who clearly displays frustration over the death of the young boy that he has treated. The films thus makes it plain that it is up to white Westerners to help Africa and not up to the Africans themselves.

This clearly manifests itself in the actions of Solomon because his only role in the film is to execute the orders of Carter. Solomon is thus not coded as a person who is himself capable of leading the African struggle for a better life for all Africans, and neither is anyone of the other African characters. They are reduced to passive bystanders while it is the white Westerners’ role to help Africa. This is also emphasized by the fact that none of the black African characters are allowed any subjectivity in the film. This further denies them the possibility to express how they feel about Africa’s problems, something that is only granted the white characters, like Carter and Elvira.

Carter and his group are coded as terrorists and their actions as terrorist attacks. Even the film’s hero, Wallander, refers to it as such. This coding is further emphasized by Carter’s ruthless actions. He for example orders Solomon to murder Sonja and Jonas even though they are innocent people who have not done anything wrong. This is also underlined by Wallander in the end of the film, when he confronts Elvira about the group’s actions. He then reminds her that neither Jonas nor Sonja have done anything wrong, that they did not deserve to die. Elvira admits that it was wrong to kill them, but that it was necessary. Wallander then responds in a snide tone of voice that “everything is justified when there are obstacles in your way”. This clearly shows that Wallander is strongly against the actions of Carter’s group. As the film’s hero, he receives most of the subjectivity and therefore also most of the audience’s sympathy. This also grants him the power to code which characters are important and deserve sympathy and which ones who do not.

Carter’s brutality is further explored when he kills Elvira even though she is a close friend of his. Carter and his group are thus coded as unsympathetic. This, combined with the fact that the film’s hero fights their attack and saves the banks also contributes to defending the imperialist system of the Western World. It also suggests that if Africa and the Western World become equal, the Western World will perish.

There is only one character in Firewall (2006) that is openly racist, Istvan. When Wallander has lunch in his restaurant, Istvan describes Solomon as “a very creepy person” and repeatedly refers to him as the n-word. Wallander does not protest against Istvan’s racist remarks. He does not express any physical signs of discomfort either, through for example body language or facial expressions. The racist in Istvan’s statements is also neutralized
because he himself has a non-Swedish name and speaks broken Swedish. Istvan is thus himself coded as an immigrant and is therefore not perceived as someone that can be racist. Sonja commits the despicable act of killing the taxi driver. However, her behavior is explained and excused by both Maja and Wallander, because they inform the audience that the taxi driver previously raped Sonja. This encourages the spectator to sympathize with Sonja. Solomon on the other hand, never receives subjectivity and is thereby refused the opportunity to explain his behavior. The audience is thus denied the opportunity to understand why Solomon commits murders on behalf of Carter. Firewall (2006) thus gives the white character Sonja the opportunity to explain her behavior, something that is denied the black character of the film.

5.1.4. Irene Huss: Protected by Shadows (2011)

In Irene Huss: Protected by Shadows (2011), there are two black characters, Naomi (Natacha Mutomb Dackén) and Maria (Nanna Blondell). Naomi is established as a criminal already in the first sequence she appears in, when she steals dynamite from the construction site where she works. Later, the detectives also inform the audience that Naomi has previously served a jail sentence for participation in armed robbery. The film also denies Naomi subjectivity so she does not receive the opportunity to explain why she committed the robbery and why she steals the dynamite.

In the scene when Naomi steals the dynamite, her hands are first the only part of her body seen in the shot as she opens the door to the storage room. Then she is filmed at an angle from behind while her face is shadowed. This camera angle and the fact that the audience cannot see her face, denies the spectator from identifying with Naomi in the same time as it denies Naomi the opportunity to display her facial expressions. This operates as a way of denying Naomi subjectivity since she cannot show her reactions to the actions she performs. We cannot see if she is reluctant about stealing the dynamite or if she enjoys doing it, for example. Inside the storage room, Naomi’s hands are again the only part of her body featured in the shot as she picks up the dynamite from the crate. In this sequence too, Naomi is thus denied to convey her reactions and emotions to the spectator, since her face is not visible. In comparison, all the white characters in the film have their faces clearly visible for the camera. Their faces are never covered by shadows. Nor are other parts of their bodies but their faces the only things seen in the camera shots.
Naomi does, however, receive some point-of-view shots in Protected by Shadows (2011). In the biker’s club locale, she anxiously informs her boyfriend that her colleagues will soon notice if she continues stealing dynamite from the storage room. However, in this sequence, lighting and visibility benefits Naomi’s white boyfriend and not Naomi herself. At first, Naomi’s boyfriend is filmed for several seconds as he walks towards the door to open it. When Naomi enters the club, she quickly kisses him and then turns her back to the camera. She is next filmed from the side and her face is partially shadowed. This denies the audience from seeing Naomi completely, as well as it denies them the opportunity to identify with her. Instead, the spectator is encouraged to focus on the white characters that star in this sequence. The white characters never turn their backs to the camera either, which makes identification with them possible.

This sequence also codes Naomi as a loyal assistant to the criminal biker gang. Even though she expresses worry about stealing the dynamite, she does not state that she will never do it again. She also reminds her boyfriend that she has not yet received pay for the second time when she stole dynamite. Her boyfriend later tells Radko that Naomi wants pay, but Radko just responds with “who does not want to get paid?” Then Naomi is sent out of the club without receiving her salary. She does not pursue her wish to receive pay by, for example, refusing to perform any more tasks for the gang until she has received her salary. Nor does she refuse to steal any more dynamite for the club considering the risk of being caught. This codes Naomi as a loyal assistant to the biker gang, someone that is willing to take great risks for them without even receiving salary for it. Naomi’s actions are not based on her own will, but she only follows the instructions of the white characters. She steals the dynamite because Radko and her boyfriend have told her to, not out of her own free will.

Throughout the film, Naomi’s role is to perform actions that help the white characters and not herself. This, combined with her lack of subjectivity, reduces Naomi to only exist in relation to the white characters. It also codes her as a reproduction of the Uncle Tom stereotype, because she remains loyal to the biker’s gang and accept being abused by them without protesting.

The majority of all the times when Naomi receives subjectivity is to discuss the situation of her sister Maria who is abused by her husband. She for example enters Krister’s restaurant to confront Danny about the last time he beat Maria. In the sequence when Naomi and Maria discuss Danny’s abusive behavior, Naomi’s face is fully lit and clearly expresses concern for Maria. This behavior codes Naomi as a caring person, but it also allows her to only exist in relation to her sister, who is light-skinned.
Naomi is also coded as irrational when she plants the bomb in Danny and Maria’s house and sets the timer even though Maria and her daughters are still inside. This codes her actions as irrational rather than heroic since she endangers the very same person that she claims to want to help. Irene also repeatedly states throughout the film that it is Naomi’s responsibility to help Maria by helping the police to gather evidence against Danny and by convincing Maria to testify against her husband. Instead of doing so, Naomi gives up on helping the police and instead plants the bomb. She has also already been established as irrational when she confronts Danny at the restaurant. Afterwards, Krister tells Irene that Naomi entered the restaurant, began screaming that Danny abused his wife and that she was “completely crazy”.

Unlike Naomi, Maria always appears to the audience fully lit, which allows her to show her facial expressions and thus also gives the audience the opportunity to identify with her. She also receives more point-of-view shots than her dark-skinned sister does. However, the only times she is granted subjectivity is when she discusses her relationship with Danny or otherwise talks about him. The clearest example of this is when Maria and Naomi are in the living room in Danny and Maria’s house discussing Danny’s abusive behavior. In this sequence, Maria for example informs Naomi that Danny is expecting a child with his mistress. Maria is also coded as a victim of abuse. After she has confronted Danny about his pregnant mistress, he slaps her with the back of his hand. Next, the camera zooms in on Maria’s bruised face and the tears rolling down her cheeks. This raises the audience’s sympathy for Maria as a victim of abuse since the spectator can clearly see how she is hurting. Maria is however denied the opportunity to be a complete victim of abuse since Irene and her colleagues never express any concern for Maria’s situation. Irene never even bothers talking to Maria even though she is fully aware of the fact that Maria is being abused by her husband. Patricia, on the other hand, receives a lot of sympathy from Irene after she has been assaulted by the criminal biker gang. The film thus encourages sympathy for an abused blonde white woman but not for a black woman, even though she is systematically abused by her husband.

Instead of getting involved with helping Maria, Irene codes it as Naomi’s responsibility to help her sister. After the surveillance operation against Danny has failed, Irene tells Naomi that she is the only one that can come near Maria at this point and encourage her to convince Maria to testify against her husband. However, this is not true, since Irene has known about Maria’s situation a long time prior to this and has had several opportunities to discuss Danny’s abuse with Maria. It is also clear that Irene is only using Maria as a mean to gather evidence against Danny so that the police can arrest him. She thus does not really care about
Maria, but only about solving the case. In Naomi’s apartment, Irene is disrespectful towards Naomi and yells at her, something that she never does to any of the white characters. Irene is coded as a strong and independent woman that is not depending on her husband or any other man. She thus defies patriarchy. However, in her relationship with black women, it is clear that she is still serving the patriarchy by reproducing its racist discourses.

Maria is also coded as an object by being described as beautiful. This is established already in the first sequence that she appears in, when one of the guests at the restaurant describes her as beautiful and as a former professional model. This, in combination with her absence of goals and actions that bring the story forward, as well as her only receiving subjectivity to discuss her relationship with Danny, reduces Maria to an object whose only purpose in the film is to be looked at and admired for her beauty. She also only exists in relation to her white husband.

While Maria is coded as beautiful, her dark skinned sister Naomi is not. Maria always wears clothes that show her feminine and curvy body, in the same time as she always wears make-up. Naomi on the other hand wears plain clothes, like baggy pants, tank tops and leather jackets. The colors are either black, brown or white, while Maria’s clothes are colorful. This further helps highlighting Maria’s beauty while it makes Naomi appear as dull. Naomi never wears make-up either. Not even Naomi’s boyfriend codes her as beautiful, something he instead does with Irene. This becomes clear when he comes onto Irene outside the biker’s club in the beginning of the film. He also looks at her lustfully, clearly expressing that he likes the way she looks. Naomi’s boyfriend never expresses any affection towards Naomi either. He only uses her in order to get the dynamite. This is not something that Naomi complaints about, but she accepts being used. However, there is a difference between Irene and the two black women: Irene is not reduced to being an object, like Maria, because Irene is an independent and intelligent character that takes on an active role in the film. The two black women, on the other hand, only exist in relation to men in the same time as they are passive. Naomi is also coded as irrational, which creates a contrast to Irene’s intelligence.

To code Maria as beautiful and attractive while Naomi is not, is a case of representing light-skinned characters as better than dark-skinned ones. Maria with her light skin is seen as desirable while her dark skinned sister is not. Another example of this is that Maria exists only in relation to her white husband, while Naomi’s role in Protected by Shadows (2011) is to both exist in relation to the white criminal characters as well as in relation to her light-skinned sister. The fact that Naomi’s only goal in the film is to help Maria, further emphasizes that Maria has a higher status in the film because she has light skin. The lighting is also used
in order to establish Maria’s higher status as a light-skinned character since she is always fully lit, in the same time as the cinematography centers Maria in the frame, something that rarely happens to Naomi. Maria’s face is always shown in the frame, which allows her to express how she feels and respond to what happens to her, something that is denied Naomi on several occasions.


In Johan Falk: The 107 patriots (2012) there are several black characters. However, only five of them play roles big enough for analyzing. These characters are Ike Zabangida (Amanual Meharj), Jim Zabangida (Yohanes Tesfay), Lizzie (Kechen Berhane), Aisha (Yodit Abraham Kidane) and Niklas (Alexander Karim). Both the Zabangida brothers and Niklas only appear in a few scenes, the majority of the scenes are occupied by the white characters. In addition, when Niklas stars in a scene, he usually costars with a white character, he is very seldom alone in the shot. Niklas is not often centered in the frame either. An example of this can be found in the sequence from the warehouse when the detectives investigate Ike’s and Per’s murders. In one shot, a white character is standing to the left while Sophie (Meliz Karlge) is centered in the frame. This makes her the focus of the audience’s attention. Niklas, on the other hand, is placed to the far right with a part of his head outside the frame, in the same time as his face is shadowed.

Niklas is usually not focalized in the shot either but appears blurry to the spectator. This is for example the case when Niklas and Johan Falk (Jakob Eklund) are in the elevator together. Johan is placed in the foreground while Niklas is in the background, diagonally behind Johan to the right. During the dialogue, there is only one single close-up on Niklas. In this shot, Niklas smiles as Johan explains the reason behind his actions during the apprehension of Valter. Niklas’ smile clearly expresses how impressed he is with Johan’s behavior. Even though Niklas is alone in the frame in this shot, the only purpose here is to make Niklas appear in relation to Johan since he expresses support for Johan’s behavior. In the beginning of the scene, Niklas is blurry while the camera focuses on Johan. This clearly establishes Johan as the focus of the spectator, in the same time as it denies the audience the opportunity to identify with Niklas.

Another example is when Niklas stands outside the hotel during the operation to apprehend the members of Legion Gothia as well as Seth’s gang. At first, Niklas appears blurry to the spectator, while the camera instead focuses on the hotel in the background. This does not
function as an establishing shot in the film’s narrative, because it has already been established that the sequence will take place in the hotel. Therefore, Niklas should be focused in the shot, but he is not. In addition, all the other detectives are active during the operation against Legion Gothia and Seth’s gang, but not Niklas. While Johan and Sophie immediately enters the parking garage to arrest the gangs, Niklas is just standing there outside the hotel. The only time he takes on an active role is to arrest the members of the Zabangida gang as they are about to enter the hotel. He does not act alone in this situation either, but with Vidar. After the Zabangida gang members have been apprehended, Patrik orders Vidar to enter the parking garage to assist Johan and Sophie, while Niklas remains outside the hotel to guard the members of the Zabangida gang. This further prevents him from taking on an active role. Niklas’ function in this sequence is thus mostly to assist the other detectives instead of performing heroic and brave actions, something that both Johan and Sophie do, as they risk their own lives to arrest the gang members in the parking garage.

In *The 107 Patriots* (2012) lighting and cinematography is used in order to prevent the audience from identifying with Niklas in the same time as it makes him a subordinate character. His lack of action also contributes to this.

Niklas also lacks a context in the film. He does not have a family or friends. This is clearly manifested at Nina’s birthday party to which Johan has invited all his colleagues except Niklas. This further denies Niklas space in the film, in the same time as it denies him the possibility to appear with a potential family. Sophie for example enters the party with her daughters, but Niklas is not even invited. This is an example of how *The 107 Patriots* (2012) contains Niklas’ masculinity, by preventing him from having a family in the film. This is further emphasized by the fact that Niklas never expresses any interest in getting romantically involved with women. This is clearly seen in the scene when Niklas, Sophie and another detective enters the warehouse. The other detective makes a pass at Sophie, something that Niklas never does. He never expresses any romantic interest for Sophie even though they work closely together and are both single. They thus have all the possibilities for developing a romantic relationship. However, Niklas remains completely uninterested in romance.

Niklas is also denied to express his masculinity since he has a very passive role in the film. Johan, on the other hand, is a typical action hero that performs many brave stunts throughout the film. He for example jumps from balcony to balcony on the fifth floor as he chases the members of Legion Gothia. No such similar opportunity is ever granted Niklas in *The 107 Patriots* (2012).
Except for the scene in the elevator, Niklas only receives one moment of subjectivity in the film. This happens during his conversation with another detective concerning Johan’s actions during the apprehension of Valter. The detective, clearly dissatisfied with Johan’s behavior, asks Niklas whether he thinks it is acceptable to “fight non-democratic powers using non-democratic means”. This scene allows Niklas to inform the audience that he has studied both law and philosophy and this is the reason why the detective asks him to comment Johan’s actions. However, the purpose of this scene is not to place Niklas in a certain context or to encourage the audience to identify with him, nor does it serve the function of allowing Niklas to express his personal opinions regarding a specific topic. The only purpose of this scene is to defend Johan’s unlawful behavior during Valter’s arrest. Niklas’ law degree is thus only used to benefit the film’s white hero and not to benefit Niklas himself. This combined with his lack of subjectivity, makes Niklas’ only function in the film to assist the white characters, in the same time as he only exists in relation to them. He also helps the white detectives by giving them the information they need to investigate the crimes. The fact that Niklas is always loyal to the white detectives and never protest against their unorthodox methods makes him a reproduction of the Uncle Tom stereotype. This also manifests itself in Niklas’ lack of interest in politics. He never once protests against the racist actions and ideology of Legion Gothia, even though this is something that should interest him as a black person.

It is important to note that Niklas’ passiveness and the fact that he always helps and assists the other characters, especially Johan, is common behavior for supporting characters in film. However, it must be taken into consideration that a black actor has been cast to play the role of Niklas and that the film’s hero is played by a white actor. In The 107 Patriots (2012), the casting choices have thus resulted in a passive black assistant whose only purpose is to exist only in relation to the white characters.

Ike Zabangida only stars in the beginning of the film. He is coded as a criminal and becomes shot by a rivaling gang already in the film’s opening scene. Ike does not receive any form of subjectivity and is thereby denied the opportunity to express how he feels and to explain his actions. Lighting is also used scarcely on Ike, which makes him merge into the background in the same time as it denies the audience the opportunity to identify with him. An example of this is when Ike stands in the kitchen in the warehouse and hears a noise. The camera uses a full shot of Ike from a long distance while the dark background prevents him from being highlighted. Instead, Ike blends into the shadows on the wall behind him.

Ike’s brother Jim is also coded as a criminal but, unlike his brother, he is also portrayed as a ruthless person. This can be seen in the scene when Jim chases one of the members of
Legion Gothia outside of the apartment building. There is a close-up of Jim’s face as he walks adamantly towards the racist, who has already been shot and is lying on the ground. Despite this, Jim continues shooting the gang member and his face clearly expresses rage. This could be Jim’s way of retaliating at Legion Gothia for killing his brother, but the film does not code it as such since Jim does not explain the reason behind this behavior. Throughout the film, Jim never receives any form of subjectivity.

Jim is also further coded as a ruthless person since he is the one that has ordered the members of his gang to torture Per. The members of the other gangs are also depicted as criminals who on occasions murder people, but they never go as far as to torture. The Zabangida gang, which consists exclusively of African immigrants, on the other hand do. The murder of Per is immediately described by one of the detectives as “torture that lasted for several hours”. The camera also zooms in on the deep cuts in Per’s arms, as well as on his hand that misses two fingers. The camera then cuts to the two missing fingers lying on the floor in a pool of blood. Later when Johan and Patrik inform their supervisor of what went on in the apartment, pictures of the tortured Per reappears on the screen. Ike’s death is not coded as that brutal by the detectives even though he was shot several times and had no opportunity to escape.

The detective that informs the other police officers of the actions that took place in the warehouse building, does not refer to Ike by his real name either, but simply calls him “the corpse”. In addition, his dead body is only shown once to the audience as the police closes the body bag. Every time the detectives talk about Per, they do so by using his real name. The brutality surrounding Per’s death thus codes the members of the Zabangida gang as ruthless criminals while the recurring use of Per’s name and not Ike’s, expresses a form of hierarchy that encourages the audience to sympathize with Per but not with Ike.

Lizzie and Aisha are the only black women in The 107 Patriots (2012). Aisha only appears in two sequences and her name is not even mentioned until the closing credits. Aisha’s and Lizzie’s only roles in the film is to be helpless victims when Legion Gothia and Seth’s gang break into Lizzie’s apartment. They also serve the purpose of being the girlfriends of Ike and Jim. This is made clear since the detectives never refer to Aisha and Lizzie by their names, but only describe them as “Ike and Jim’s girlfriends”. This reduces the two black women to only exist in relation to their boyfriends.

The audience is also denied the opportunity to sympathize with Lizzie since she later brutally assaults the racist in the back of Jim’s van. In this sequence, there is only one close-up of Lizzie as she ferociously kicks the member of Legion Gothia. She has also cut one of
his fingers off since he has refused to tell Jim where the other members of Legion Gothia hide. This sequence also reduces Lizzie to a person that only exists in relation to her boyfriend since her actions here serve the purpose of assisting Jim.

The spectator is also denied the possibility to sympathize with Lizzie because she does not explain the reasons behind her behavior. She is thus not granted subjectivity. Her actions could be a revenge for Legion Gothia assaulting her and Aisha in the apartment as well as for the murder of Ike. However, since Lizzie, just like all the other black characters in the Zabangida gang, is not granted subjectivity, the film does not code it as such.

Dan’s behavior, on the other hand, is explained by his wish to retaliate against the people that killed his daughter. Even though we never see who fired the shot that killed Sissa, Dan clearly codes the Zabangida brothers as responsible as he watches them flee from the scene of the shooting. In this sequence, there is an eye-line match of Dan looking first at his dead daughter and then at the car as Ike and Jim escape. This codes them as the shooters, something that is further emphasized by the fact that neither Ike nor Jim ever discuss the event. They never once state that they are innocent, which indirectly makes them admit that they are responsible for Sissa’s death.

In The 107 Patriots (2012), racism is contained to only be found among certain extreme people or groups, through the use of Legion Gothia, who are coded as a Neo-Nazi gang. Their leader Dan repeatedly refers to black people as apes and calls them the n-word. The Legion Gothia member that guards Per’s house, refers to Niklas and Sophie as “the darkie” and “the Pakistani whore”. By reducing racism to be an ideology that only a few extreme people adopt, the film also denies the fact that racism is a set of power structures, which permeates the entire society. The 107 Patriots (2012) also reduces racism to be an issue that can easily be solved within the narrative of a film. Therefore, the film suggests that, after all the members of Legion Gothia have been apprehended, racism is no longer an issue in the Swedish society.

Sissa is a blond, white girl and therefore symbolizes the nation of Sweden. She always appears in the center of the frame and is fully lit, something that further expresses her childlike innocence. The clearest example of Sissa’s function as a symbol of the nation is Per’s video from one of Legion Gothia’s meetings. Sissa looks straight into the camera and smiles widely. During Dan’s speech, she runs around the tables playing, paying no interest to the words spoken by her father. As all the members leave their seats to yell “heil seger”, Sissa eyes them with great confusion. This emphasizes the innocence of a child, but it also distances Sissa from the racists. She does not participate in the racist activities, nor does she understand
them. Even though Sissa is the daughter of a Neo-Nazi man, she does not share his opinions. Instead, she symbolizes the image of Sweden being a tolerant, innocent and antiracist country.

In *The 107 Patriots* (2012), the Zabangida gang are coded as immigrants, something that is made plain since they all speak broken Swedish. Ike and Jim also have non-Swedish names. The members of the Zabangida gang are also represented as ruthless and brutal criminals that oppose a threat to Sweden as a nation when they shoot Sissa. Niklas, on the other hand, has a Swedish name and speaks Swedish fluently. He also works for the police, which are coded as the film’s good guys. Niklas is also a very nice person that never hurts anyone. To code black immigrants as dangerous criminals and black Swedes as nice people, thus serves the purpose of describing black Swedes as better than black people from other parts of the world.

*The 107 Patriots* (2012) superficially presents a criticism of racism by suggesting that the racist ideology is only adopted by a few extreme individuals in society. In the same time, the film itself uses racist discourses by presenting Niklas as a loyal Uncle Tom character, whose only purpose in the film is to exist in relation to the white characters. *The 107 Patriots* (2012) also reproduces racist discourses by representing black immigrants as dangerous criminals who torture people to death, in the same time as they oppose a threat to the Swedish society.

5.2. Discussion

In *The Class Reunion* (2001), the scene where Hillevi’s teacher assumes that Hillevi is from Africa because she is black, can be seen as a way for the film to challenge people’s stereotyped images of black people. However, the film still reproduces these images by coding Hillevi as an African adoptee. *The Class Reunion* (2001) thus reproduces the same stereotyped images that it tries to challenge, by claiming that a black person cannot be born in Sweden or Denmark but must have become Swedish or Danish through for example adoption from Africa. The fact that the film also repeatedly brings the audience’s attention to Hillevi being black, codes her as deviant from the white characters who are never coded as white. This is thus an example of what Park, Gabbadon and Chernin state in their article (2006, p. 159). Park, Gabbadon and Chernin also discuss how films can neutralize racism by not allowing the black characters to take offence or protest against the racist jokes that are made about them (2006, p. 159). This is also found in *The Class Reunion* (2001) because Hillevi never protests against the racist jokes that Jeanette, Åsa and Tommy make about her. The fact that many of the jokes in *The Class Reunion* (2001) concern Hillevi being black, also helps strengthening the position of the dominant white society and makes white people feel
comfortable, something that Park, Gabbadon and Chernin also discuss in their article (2006, p. 163f.).

*The Class Reunion* (2001) also gives examples of Gates’ study concerning how films contain racist issues by limiting them to for example a certain time (2004, p. 26). This film makes it plain that racism should be seen as something that belongs in childhood, something that children do because they do not know better. After the characters have grown up, they never make any more racist jokes about Hillevi, or even refer to her blackness (2004, p. 25).

Gates also states that it is usually the white characters who are in the center of the narrative and that the black characters only exist in relation to them (2004, p. 25). This is clearly shown in *The Class Reunion* (2001), because Magnus is the protagonist and therefore also in the center of the narrative. The film revolves around him and his life. This is also found in the fact that Hillevi is not granted a context in the film. She does not have any friends or family and her past life in Amsterdam is never described in the film. The only times Hillevi is granted subjectivity is to describe her relationship with Magnus. This reduces Hillevi to be an object that only exists in relation to the film’s white protagonist.

In *White Trash* (2005), the fact that Samir is black is used in order to create humor. This makes him stand out as deviant since the film does not make jokes about, or even focus on, the white characters’ skin color. This fits into what Park, Gabbadon and Chernin discuss in their article (2006, p. 159). Since Samir is also a reproduction of the Uncle Tom stereotype, the portrayal of him serves the purpose of obtaining racial hierarchies as well. *White Trash* (2005) does so by suggesting that black people should accept being treated badly by whites (Park & Gabbadon & Chernin 2006, p. 159). Just as Park, Gabbadon and Chernin discuss, the film also neutralizes racism because Samir never protests against being called racist names by Edith (2006, p. 159). Since most of the jokes in *White Trash* (2005) refer to Samir’s blackness, it makes white people feel good about themselves by strengthening their dominant position in society. Since Samir also contributes to the racist jokes himself, by for example telling Edith that she looks like him when she has printer’s ink in her face, the racism in this joke is neutralized. The reason for this is that, as a black person, Samir is not seen as someone that can be racist. The audience thus perceives the joke as something that is acceptable to laugh at. This also fits into the study of Park, Gabbadon and Chernin (2006, p. 163 f.).

Just like Gates states, *White Trash* (2005) also oversimplifies racist issues by claiming that they can be solved during the film’s plot (2004, p. 25). In this film, it takes the form of claiming that only a few people in society are racist and that these individuals can easily change their behavior and abandon the racist ideology. This is what happens to Edith and Mrs.
Ekdahl, who change their racist opinions after they have gotten to know Samir. Gates’ theory about placing the white characters in the center of the narrative and the blacks in the margins, is also found in *White Trash* (2005) (2004, p. 25). As the protagonist, Rita is in the center of the narrative. In addition, other white characters, like Knut and Edith, are in the center of the narrative since they receive several opportunities of subjectivity and are therefore allowed to explain their behavior. They also appear more often in front of the camera than Samir does. Samir, on the other hand, only exists in relation to Edith, something that is clearly shown because he disappears from the narrative after Edith has been committed to the hospital. This also fits into Gates’ study (2004, p. 25). Gates’ theory about containment is also applicable to *White Trash* (2005) in that the film limits racism to something that is only found among certain individuals and not in society as a whole (2004, p. 26).

In his article, Gustafsson discusses the Uncle Tom stereotype and describes this character as a loyal and submissive servant. In the silent film era in Sweden, this was one of the most common depictions of black people and it was usually found in feature films of this time (2008, p. 37; p. 43f.). As the analysis of *White Trash* (2005) shows, this stereotype is also found in this contemporary Swedish feature film because Samir is coded as a loyal and submissive person that assists Edith throughout the film. He only protests twice against the way Edith treats him, but usually accepts and laughs at the racist jokes she makes about him. He even at one point himself contributes to the film’s racial humor.

Gates’ theory about how only white characters are allowed to occupy the center of the narrative (2004, p. 25) is applicable also to *Firewall* (2006). This manifests itself in that the film’s protagonist is Kurt Wallander, a white man. The white characters also appear more frequently in front of the camera, while Solomon only appears a few times. Solomon is also denied the opportunity of subjectivity, something that is often granted the white characters. In addition, Solomon only exists in relation to Carter, which is clearly shown since his purpose in the film is to carry out the orders of Carter. Solomon also lacks goals, but he only exists in the film’s narrative to fulfill Carter’s goals. This fits into Gates’ study about how black characters are only allowed to exist in relation to the white characters (2004, p. 25). *Firewall* (2006) also corresponds to Gates’ theory about the detective genre in that the film’s hero is a white man (2004, p. 21).

The racist names that Solomon is called by Istvan, are coded as acceptable since Istvan himself belongs to a minority group and is therefore not perceived as someone who can be racist. Even though Istvan’s racist statements about Solomon are not used as jokes specifically, they still serve the purpose of denying that Istvan can be a racist person. Thus
this fits into Park, Gabbadon and Chernin’s study which shows the neutralization of racism (2006, p. 163f.). Istvan’s racist statements about Solomon also serve the purpose of limiting racism to only be found within certain individuals since none of the other characters in the film express any racism towards Solomon. Thus, this aspect of Firewall (2006) also fits into Gates’ study of containment (2004, p. 26).

Firewall (2006) also reproduces the white savior myth, which is found especially in Carter. He is clearly coded as such in the film because his goal is to rescue Africa by destroying Western capitalism. There are also other white savior characters in the film, like Elvira and Tynnes. What they all have in common is that they are white Europeans and that their mission is to rescue Africa. There are no black Africans involved with this group, which makes it clear that the film suggests that black people cannot save Africa, only white Europeans can. This fits into the study of Gustafsson regarding how white men have to rescue black Africans (2008, p. 38), even though Firewall (2006) also includes a female white savior.

Just like in White Trash (2005), Firewall (2006) also reproduces the Uncle Tom stereotype that Gustafsson discusses in his article (2008, p. 37; p. 43f.). Solomon resembles this stereotyped character by being loyal and submissive to Carter. He constantly follows Carter’s orders without hesitation. He only protests once but finally executes the order anyway. This fits into how Gustafsson describes this character in his text because he codes the Uncle Tom stereotype as a loyal and submissive servant (2008, p. 37; p. 43f.). This fits into the portrayal of Solomon because he only serves the purpose of assisting Carter in Firewall (2006).

In Irene Huss: Protected by Shadows (2011), Naomi shows evidence of how a black character can be a reproduction of several stereotypes at once, something that fits into the study of Park, Gabbadon and Chernin (2006, p. 163f.). This is found in the film because Naomi is both irrational, unattractive and a loyal Uncle Tom-like assistant to the biker gang. Gates’ theory regarding how white characters are in the center of the narrative while the black characters are limited to the margins is also found in Protected by Shadows (2011). This denies the black characters from having power, which is instead limited to the whites (2004, p. 25). The protagonist is Irene, who is a white woman, and most of the film revolves around her and her family. The other detectives also take up a lot of space in front of the camera, something that is denied the film’s two black characters Naomi and Maria. In addition, the black characters are only granted a few occasions of subjectivity while the whites are constantly allowed to tell the story from their perspective and express how they feel.

That Naomi is coded as irrational and that she is a reproduction of the Uncle Tom stereotype also agrees with the result of Gustafsson’s study (2008, p. 37f.; p. 43f.). Naomi is
coded as irrational in that she places a bomb inside Maria and Danny’s house, even though her sister and nieces are still inside. She is also coded as an Uncle Tom since her role in the film is limited to assisting the biker gang and to follow their orders. This is something that Naomi does even though they only use her and do not even pay her. Gustafsson’s description of how the Uncle Tom character is portrayed as a loyal and submissive servant (2008, p. 37; p. 43f.), thus corresponds to how Naomi is depicted in Protected by Shadows (2011).

Niklas in Johan Falk: The 107 Patriots (2012) gives an example of Gates’ theories concerning the containment of black masculinity (2004). In this film, Niklas does not express any romantic interest in his colleague Sophie, even though they are both single in the same time as they are two attractive characters. Instead, it is one of their white male colleagues who makes a pass at Sophie. To code black men as not having any romantic interest in women is a strategy used to restrain black masculinity, which Gates argues for in her article (2004, p. 23).

The 107 Patriots (2012) also gives an example of how films oversimplify racist issues by reducing them to something that can easily be solved during a film’s plot. After Legion Gothia have been apprehended, it is indicated that racism is no longer an issue in the Swedish society. This corresponds with Gates’ study as well (2004, p. 25). Gates also argues that it is usually the white characters that are in the center of the narrative and that the black characters are reduced to the margins (2004, p. 25). Like in the other films studied, this is also the case with The 107 Patriots (2012) because Niklas only appears in a few shots and, most often when he appears, he costars with a white character. The film’s protagonist is Johan Falk and he therefore appears most often in front of the camera, in the same time as he is granted several opportunities of subjectivity. This is something that is denied Niklas. He only receives a few point-of-view perspectives and they all serve the purpose of either being work-related, or to defend Johan’s unlawful behavior. This also reduces Niklas to only exist in relation to the white characters, and especially Johan. To make black characters fill this function in a film, also corresponds with Gates’ study (2004, p. 25).

Gates’ theory about containment (2004, p. 26) can also be applied to The 107 Patriots (2012) since the film contains racism to something only found among certain individuals, in this case, the extreme Neo-Nazis in Legion Gothia. The presentation of Niklas as a loyal and subordinate character also corresponds with Gustafsson’s theory regarding the Uncle Tom stereotype (2008, p. 37; p. 43f.). Niklas fills the function of serving Johan since he provides him with the help he needs to solve the cases in the same time as he defends Johan’s questionable behavior.
6. Concluding Discussion

The result of the film analyses does not correspond to the study of Gustafsson regarding how Swedish documentary films depicted black people in the 1920s (2008). The black characters in the films studied in this essay are not only included to shock and amaze the audience, which Gustafsson describes in his article (2008, p. 37). None of the films studied code black people as apes either, like the films Gustafsson studies (2008, p. 38f.). However, in Johan Falk: The 107 Patriots (2012), the racist leader of Legion Gothia, Dan, repeatedly refers to blacks as apes. By doing so, the film hides Sweden’s racist past by claiming that only a few extreme people, like the members of Legion Gothia, are racist. It is thus an example of containment, how racism is not coded as a set of complex power structures but instead as something that is only found among certain groups or individuals (Pallas 2011, p. 82; Eriksson Baaz 2001, p. 165). This theory is also exemplified in The Class Reunion (2001), White Trash (2005) and Firewall (2006).

Not a single one of the films studied in this essay, represents black people as cannibals and therefore this part of Gustafsson’s article (2008, p. 41) does not correspond to the result of the analyses. It is however important to note that only feature films are analyzed in this study, while the part of Gustafsson’s article mentioned above, primarily discusses documentary films and animations. Therefore, more research on black representation in twenty-first century Swedish documentaries and animations is required before one can completely dismiss the possibility that these depictions are still found in Swedish film today.

None of the films analyzed expresses criticism towards Sweden’s postcolonial structure or towards racism and therefore do not correspond to Habel’s study (2008, p. 262f.). However, since all the films analyzed use discriminatory discourses towards African Swedes the result corresponds to the study of Hübinette, Beshir and Kawesa, who state that negative representations of Black people are still found in Swedish media (2014, p. 22). Hübinette, Beshir and Kawesa’s study regarding how black people are being presented as eroticized objects and exotified people (2014, p. 22) does not correspond to the results of the analysis.

The film Wallander: Firewall (2006) gives examples of the theory of Shohat and Stam, who argue that the lives of Africans are coded as less worth than the lives of for example Swedes (1997, p. 24f.). They also discuss the term “reverse racism”, which means that white people are believed to suffer if the situations for blacks improve (Shohat & Stam 1997, p. 24f.). This is found in Firewall (2006) because the group that aims to liberate Africa plan to do so by disabling the banks in the Western World in order to create economical balance.
between the two continents. By interrupting the attack, the detectives also emphasize how the improvement of African peoples can only happen at the expense of people in the Western World. Since the detectives are Swedes, the Swedish audience is encouraged to sympathize with and identify with the Western World, something that also corresponds to the theory of Shohat and Stam (1997, p. 24f.).

The theory regarding how white characters are usually in the center of the story by playing the leading roles while the black characters play supporting roles (Shohat & Stam 1997, p. 189) corresponds to all films analyzed in this essay. In addition, in all the films studied, the black characters only receive a few opportunities of subjectivity (Shohat & Stam 1997, p. 205), while the white characters are frequently granted subjectivity and thereby receive the opportunity to explain their behavior and feelings to the audience (Shohat & Stam 1997, p. 208). This is however denied the black characters. In *The Class Reunion* (2001) and *Irene Huss: Protected by Shadows* (2011), there are also clear examples of how the African Swedish characters only receive point-of-view perspective while discussing their relationships to their husbands or boyfriends. This reduces them to only exist in relation to the white men that they have relationships with and thus corresponds to the theory of Diawara concerning how black characters only exist in relation to whites (2011, p. 595f.).

All the other films analyzed also give examples that correspond to this theory. In *Firewall* (2006), Solomon’s only function is to act out the orders of Carter. He does not have any own desires or a will of his own. In *The 107 Patriots* (2012), Niklas’ only function is to assist and help Johan Falk. Naomi fills the same purpose for the biker gang in *Protected by Shadows* (2011). The film *White Trash* (2005) also clearly codes how Samir only exists in relation to Edith since he disappears from the narrative after her death.

In all the films studied in this essay, the white characters appear frequently while the black characters only appear in a few scenes. Not a single one of the black characters in the analyzed films have clear goals in the same time as they are passive. Their only function is to serve the white characters and to act on their orders. This agrees with Shohat and Stam’s theories concerning common ways for films to create discriminatory discourses (1997, p. 208).

Both Jilani and Dyer discuss different ways in which a film’s lighting can be used in order to benefit the white characters over the black ones (Jilani 2015, p. 107; Dyer 1997, p. 86f.; p. 96; p. 89; p. 102). Jilani for example argues that the black characters can be shadowed or partly shadowed, something that results in that the audience is discouraged from identifying with them (2015, p. 107). Dyer also states that lighting is used to emphasize the most
important characters and to prevent them from blending into the background (1997, p. 86f.; p. 96; p. 89). In *White Trash* (2005), the sequence from Rita’s birthday party shows how lighting is used in order to make Samir merge into the background and therefore prevents the audience from identifying with him. It also clearly marks that Samir is not part of the community. In *Protected by Shadows* (2011), Naomi’s face usually appears shadowed or partly shadowed, something that prevents her from expressing her feelings and reactions to certain actions, in the same time as the spectator is prevented from identifying with her. This is also the case with Ike and Niklas in *The 107 Patriots* (2012). What all these films have in common, is that the white characters’ faces are never shadowed or partly shadowed, but they appear fully lit to the audience.

Shohat and Stam argue that cinematography can also be used in a way that discriminates against the black characters (1997, p. 208). This is found in *Protected by Shadows* (2011), where Naomi’s face is often turned away from the camera, something that prevents the audience from seeing her face and facial expressions clearly. This also takes the form of Naomi’s face often not even being in the shot, but instead other parts of her body are. Similar situations occur in *The 107 Patriots* (2012) where Niklas is seldom centered in the frame. He usually costars with another character and in one scene, a part of his head is outside of the frame. The camera often does not focus on Niklas either, something that makes him appear blurry to the spectator.

In four of the films, there are examples of how only the white characters are allowed to explain the reason for their behavior. In *The Class Reunion* (2001), Magnus leaves his wife because he does not love her anymore, while the reason why Hillevi leaves Magnus is never explained. In *The 107 Patriots* (2012), Dan wants to kill the Zabangida gang in order to revenge his daughter’s death. Ike and Jim Zabangida, on the other hand, are not allowed to explain why they behave the way they do. Neither is Lizzie when she tortures the Legion Gothia member in the back of the van. They are thus coded as ruthless criminals that torture people to death, but there is no explanation to why. A similar situation is found in *Protected by Shadows* (2011), where Naomi is coded as a criminal but the reason behind her criminal behavior is never explained. In *Firewall* (2006), Sonja commits a murder, but this murder is coded as justified because the victim previously raped her. This is an example of the theories of Pallas (2011, p. 123-125).

*Protected by Shadows* (2011) and *The 107 Patriots* (2012), give examples of the theories of Fanon (1968), Means Coleman (2011) and Smith (2003) regarding different degrees of blackness. In *Protected by Shadows* (2011), this takes the form of Naomi being coded as
unattractive in relation to her light-skinned sister (Smith 2003, p. 38f.). In The 107 Patriots (2012), African Swedish Niklas is coded as a nice and sympathetic person compared to the other black characters, who are clearly coded as immigrants (Fanon 1968, p. 26; Means Coleman 2011, p. 56). Protected by Shadows (2011) also codes white Irene as attractive compared to Naomi, who is black. This is thus an example of the theory of Tobing Rony (2011, p. 851).

The theory of Diawara and Fanon, concerning how black people are coded as liabilities (2011, p. 595f.; 1968, p. 98), corresponds to two of the films analyzed, Protected by Shadows (2011) and The 107 Patriots (2012). In these films, this takes the form of coding Naomi, as well as Ike and Jim as criminals. In The 107 Patriots (2012), Ike and Jim Zabangida also threaten Sweden as a nation when they kill Sissa. According to the theory of Pallas and Tesfahuney, blonde white women represent the nation (2011, p. 63f.; 2001, p. 209).

The most common stereotype used in the analyzed films, is the Uncle Tom, who is described as a loyal, caring and submissive person that often does not care about politics (Francis 2012, p. 332; Liberato & Foster 2011, p. 376). This stereotype is reproduced in all films studied except The Class Reunion (2001).

Protected by Shadows (2011) exemplifies the theory of Mathis, who states that a woman might appear as liberated from the patriarchy while she, in fact, reproduces its racist discourses (2001, p. 59f.). This is found in Irene, who comes across as a strong and independent woman, even though her behavior towards Naomi and Maria shows that she uses a racist discourse.

The theories concerning the myth of the white savior (Liberato & Foster 2011, p. 373-375; Shome 1996, p. 504-512) only correspond to Firewall (2006). The black Africans are coded as passive while the white characters, and especially Carter, are coded as the ones who are most capable of rescuing Africa. The reason why this character only exists in this film and not in the others could be that the white savior myth is usually reproduced in films that are set in former colonies (Shome 1996, p. 504; Eriksson Baaz 2001, p. 172f.). Further studies concerning the reproduction of the white savior myth in Swedish film are therefore required, especially on films that take place in former colonialized countries.

The result of the analyses of The Class Reunion (2001) and White Trash (2005), correspond to Pallas’ theory concerning how black people have to explain or excuse their presence within certain spaces (2011, p. 53f.). Dyer and Pallas, state that it is seen as normal to be white and that black people therefore are coded as deviant (Dyer 2011, p. 825; Pallas 2011, p. 61). The Class Reunion (2001), White Trash (2005) and Firewall (2006), all give
examples of this in that they code the black characters as black, while the white characters are never referred to as white.

As mentioned previously, general statements regarding black representation in Swedish film cannot be made based on the result of this study, due to the small amount of empirical material studied. This study can however be used as a starting-point to perform more extensive studies on black representation in Swedish film, both on motion pictures produced in the twenty-first century as well as films produced in other decades. To include more empirical material would make it possible to make general statements about black representation in Swedish film.

It is also possible to make an intersectional analysis, that is to say, to combine a study of race with studies of for example age, gender and class. The films studied in this essay mostly belong to the comedy and detective genre. This study can therefore be used to undertake further studies of black representation in Swedish films from these genres. Other genres can also be studied to compare the results of those analyses with the results of this study. It is also possible to use this study as a foundation for studying black representation in Scandinavian film.

7. Summary

The aim of this essay was to study black representation in twenty-first century Swedish films through the analysis of five films produced in or coproduced in Sweden. To study this problem, theories concerning black representation and whiteness were used, primarily those of Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1997), Hynek Pallas (2011) and Richard Dyer (1997; 2011). The result of the analysis shows that all the films use different strategies of oppressing black people. In all the films studied, the protagonists are white while the black characters only play small roles in the same time as they are only granted a few opportunities of subjectivity. The majority of the times when the black characters are granted subjectivity, the purpose of this is to make them exist only in relation to the whites. The black characters are also reduced to exist only in relation to the whites because the plot revolves around the white characters. The African Swedish characters on the other hand only play minor roles.

In all the films studied, the black characters only appear a few times, while the whites appear frequently. The African Swedish characters are also passive and lack goals. The white characters on the other hand are the ones who are active and contribute to the story by creating cause- and effect events. They also have clear goals. The African Swedish characters
only fill the function of assisting the white ones. In four out of the five films studied, the white characters who commit heinous acts, receive the opportunity to explain their behavior, something that allows the spectator to sympathize with and identify with them. The black characters on the other hand never receive any such opportunities in any of the films analyzed.

The most common stereotype reproduced in the films studied, is the loyal, caring and submissive Uncle Tom stereotype, which can be found in all films except for one.
8. Bibliography

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8.2. Journal Articles


8.3. Journal Articles, Previous Research


8.4. Unprinted References


8.5. Electronical Resources


8.6. Filmography

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