

## Abstract

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*A Separate Room. Establishing the subject at the close of the twentieth century: Ninni Holmqvist, Hanne Ørstavik, Jon Fosse, Magnus Dahlström and Kirsten Hammann.*

Ph.D. dissertation in Swedish with a summary in English, p. 288.

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Distribution: Makadam förlag

ISBN: 978-91-7061-082-0

The establishment of the subject and various aspects of identity that occupied the literature and theories of the late twentieth century are examined in this doctoral thesis. Focus is on five Scandinavian novels from the 1990's, two from Sweden, two from Norway and one from Denmark. They are studied in the following order: Ninni Holmqvist's *Något av bestående karaktär* ("Something of Lasting Character" 1999), Hanne Ørstavik's *Kjærlighet* ("Love" 1997), Jon Fosse's *Bly og vatn* ("Lead and Water" 1992) and Magnus Dahlström's *Hem* ("Home" 1996). The fifth novel, Kirsten Hammann's *Vera Winkelvir* (1993), is added in the concluding chapter. By including this novel, in many ways a radical narrative of an emerging subject, I can further develop previously noted observations.

The title of this thesis alludes to Virginia Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own* from 1929. In it she raises the question of the right to a personal space, a right she means should apply to all human beings, not only to a limited male elite. As interest in the individual successively increased after the appearance of Woolf's essay, the question of space diminished. By the end of the century, novelists as well as theoreticians were clearly far more concerned with the problems and effects of individualism.

The five novels are analyzed chapter by chapter through the use of four central categories in contemporaneous discussions of subject and identity, namely nomenclature, intimacy, spatiality and corporeality. I also utilize writings by an international selection of theoreticians, predominantly Judith Butler, Zygmunt Bauman, Anthony Giddens and Michel Foucault. Opposing positions can be discerned in contemporary perspectives on the subject; on the one hand a view of identity characterized by essentialistic thinking, and on the other a deconstructivistic breakdown of the subject. This study shows how a partially renewed individualistic way of thinking actually provides a starting point for those works that in fact question contemporary individualism. Further, by enacting shifts in their common genre, the five novels considered modify older understandings of the subject. Extremities clash through the exposure of weaknesses in the two opposed positions, leading to a concluding elucidation of the partially renewed establishment of the subject.

*Key words:* identity, individualism, class, gender, the scandinavian novel of the 1990's, late modernity, discursive theory, performativity theory, Ninni Holmqvist, Hanne Ørstavik, Jon Fosse, Magnus Dahlström, Kirsten Hammann

# ETT RUM FÖR SIG

**SUBJEKTSFRAMSTÄLLNING VID 1900-TALETSLUT:**

**NINNI HOLMQVIST, HANNE ØRSTAVIK,**

**JON FOSSE, MAGNUS DAHLSTRÖM**

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Akademisk avhandling för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen i  
litteraturvetenskap vid Göteborgs universitet, som med tillstånd av  
humanistiska fakultetsnämnden kommer att offentlig försvaras  
torsdagen den 20 maj 2010, kl. 15.15 i Lilla Hörsalen,  
Humanisten, Renströmsgatan 6, Göteborg



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